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Genesis

Chapter 1

How God Created the Universe and Everything in It

1{This is how everything} began: God created the heavens and the earth. **2**{At first after that,} the earth did not have {its present} form, and there was nothing {living} on it. It was {totally} dark, there was deep water {everywhere}, and God's Spirit was moving above the water. **3**Then God said, "I command light to start shining!" And {immediately} light started shining. **4**God observed that the light {was} excellent. Then he divided the light from the darkness {so that each had its own time}. **5**He named the light Daytime, and the darkness he named Nighttime. Then evening came, and {later} morning came, {and that was} {the end of} the first day.

6Then God said, "I command there to be a large space in the middle of the water, so that it divides the water into two separate places." **7**That is how God made a large space and used it to divide the water that {was} below the space from the water that {was} above it. Everything happened {exactly} as he commanded, **8**and he named the space Sky. Then evening came, and {later} morning came, {and that was} {the end of} the second day.

9Then God said, "I command the water {that is} below the sky to come together in one place so that there is dry ground." And that is {exactly} what happened. **10**Then God named the ground that had dried off Land, and he named the water which had gathered together Ocean. And he observed that {what he had made was} excellent.

11Then God said, "I command the land to produce {green} plants all over the earth, {including} {all types of} plants that produce seeds {and} {all types of} fruit trees that produce their own type of fruit with seeds inside." And that is {exactly} what happened. **12**The land started producing {green} plants, {including} {all types of} plants that produce their own type of seeds and {all types of} trees that produce their own type of fruit with seeds inside. God observed that {what he had made was} excellent. **13**Then evening came, and {later} morning came, {and that was} {the end of} the third day.

14Then God said, "I command there to be sources of light in the sky that divide the day{time} from the night{time}. They must also mark when important things happen, and {they must} show when seasons, days and years begin {and end}. **15**They must function as lights in the sky that shine {light} on the earth." And that is {exactly} what happened. **16**That is how God made the two bright lights, the brighter light to shine during the day{time}, and the weaker light to shine during the night{time}. {That is} also {when he made} the stars. **17**He put those lights in the sky to shine light on the earth, **18**to shine during the day{time} or during the night{time}, and to divide the light from the darkness. God observed that {what he had made was} excellent. **19**Then evening came, and {later} morning came, {and that was} {the end of} the fourth day.

20Then God said, "I command there to be large groups of {water} animals that live everywhere in the water. I also command there to be birds that fly in the sky above the earth." **21**That is how God made the huge sea animals and all {the other} {types of} animals that live all over the place in the water, {each} having its own type of young. {That is} also {how he made} all {the different types of} birds, {each} having its own type of young. God observed that {what he had made was} excellent. **22**Then he blessed them {all} by saying {to them}, "You {water animals} must have many young so that you increase {greatly} {in number} and live all over the place in the ocean. {You} birds must {also} increase {greatly} {in number} all over the earth." **23**Then evening came, and {later} morning came, {and that was} {the end of} the fifth day.

24Then God said, "I command the land to produce {all types of} animals, {each} having its own type of young, {including} domestic animals, {all types of} animals that crawl and {all} the {other types of} wild animals, {each}

having its own type of young." And that is {exactly} what happened. **25**That is how God made {all the different types of} wild animals, {each} having its own type of young, and {all} the domestic animals, {each} having its own type of young, and all {different types of} animals that crawl on the ground, {each} having its own type of young. God observed that {what he had made was} excellent.

26Then God said {to himself}, "{Now} we should make human beings to be like us and act like us, and let us put them in charge of the fish in the ocean, the birds in the sky, the domestic animals, and the entire earth, including all the animals that live on the earth." **27**So God created human beings to be like himself. {Yes,} he made them to be like himself. He {also} created them {to be} male or female.

28Then God blessed them by saying to them, "Have many children so that you {and your descendants} increase {greatly} {in number} and live all over the earth and take control of it. You are in charge of the fish in the ocean, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that live on the land." **29**Then he {also} said {to them}, "Listen, I am {now} giving to you {for food} all {the different types of} plants that produce seeds and grow anywhere on the earth, as well as all the {different types of} trees that {produce} fruit with seeds inside it. {All of} them are yours to eat from. **30**In the same way, {I give} every {type of} green plant for food to all the {wild} animals {that live} on the earth, and all the birds {that fly} in the sky, and all the {other} animals {that live} on the land and breathe {air}." And that is how it was.

31Then God looked at everything that he had made, and he observed that it was {all} very excellent. Then evening came, and {later} morning came, {and that was} {the end of} the sixth day.

Chapter 2

1That is how God finished {creating} the heavens and the earth, including all the many things that are in them. **2**By the seventh day he had finished the work he had been doing, so he rested on that day from all that work. **3**Then God established the seventh day {as a day} to bless {people}, by setting it apart as a special time {to rest and worship him}. {He did that} because on that day he no longer did the work that he had been doing, creating {everything}.

How Yahweh Created the First Man and First Woman

4What follows tells {more details about} the history of what {God} did when he created the heavens and the earth: During the time {when} Yahweh {who is} God created the earth and the heavens, **5**{for a while} there were not yet any bushes {growing} in the fields on the earth, and there were not any {other} plants that had sprouted yet. {That was} because God had not {yet} sent rain to water the earth, and human beings did not exist {yet} to cultivate the ground. **6**{During that time} springs of water kept seeping up from underground and supplied water to the entire surface of the land. **7**Then Yahweh {who is} God {took} {some} dirt from the earth {and} formed the first man {out of it}. Then he blew his breath into the man's nostrils to make him live, so that the man became alive.

8Now Yahweh God had planted a {large} garden in {the region of} Eden, {which was} in the east, and that is where he put the man whom he had created. **9**{There} Yahweh had caused all {types of} trees to grow from the ground that are beautiful to look at and {that grow fruit that is} good to eat. In the middle of the garden was the tree whose fruit makes people live {forever}, as well as the tree whose fruit enables people to know {what is} good and {what is} evil.

10There was a river flowing through {the region of} Eden that provided water for the park. From Eden the river divided into four {smaller} rivers. **11**The first {river} {was} the Pishon {River}, which flowed around the entire region of Havilah, {a place} where {there was} {much} gold. **12**In fact, the gold from that region {was} {very} pure. A {type of} fragrant resin and {valuable} onyx gemstones {were} {also} in that region. **13**The second river {was} the Gihon {River}, which flowed around through the entire region of Cush. **14**The third river {was} the Tigris {River}, which flowed east of {the region of} Assyria, and the fourth river {was} called the Euphrates {River}.

15After Yahweh God placed the man in Eden Garden to cultivate it and take care of it, **16**he instructed him, “You may eat as much {fruit} as you want {to eat} from any tree in the garden, **17**except I forbid you to eat {any fruit} from the tree whose fruit enables people to know {what is} good and {what is} evil. If you eat {fruit} from that tree, on that {same} day you will definitely die.”

18Then Yahweh {who is} God said, “{It is} not good {for} the man to live by himself. {So} I will create someone who is just right for him to help him.” **19**Now {previously,} Yahweh had used {dirt} from the ground to form all {the different types of} wild animals and all {the different types of} birds {that fly} in the sky. So he brought {them all} to the man to hear how he would name them. Whatever name the man gave to each {kind of} animal, that {became} the name for that kind of animal. **20**The man gave names to all the {different kinds of} livestock and to {all} the {different kinds of} birds {that fly} in the sky, and to all the {different kinds of} wild animals, but none of them was an appropriate companion to help him.

21So Yahweh God caused the man to sleep deeply. Then while the man was asleep, God took a rib {out of the man’s body} and filled in the place where it had been with flesh {and healed it}. **22**Next Yahweh God made a woman from the rib which he had taken out of the man{’s body}, and he took her to the man. **23**{When the man saw her,} he exclaimed,

“Finally! Here is someone {like me}

who has bones and flesh from me!

I will call her ‘woman,’

because {it was} from {the body of} a man {that} {God} took her.”

24Because of that, {when a man gets married,} he must leave {the home of} his father and mother, and he must unite with his wife, so that they become completely united.

25{During that time} the man and his wife did not wear any clothes, but {yet} they were not ashamed {about it}.

Chapter 3

Adam and Eve Sin against Yahweh, and He Judges Them

1Now the snake was the craftiest of all the animals that Yahweh God had created. {One day} he asked the woman, “Did God really command you not to eat {fruit} from any of the trees in the garden?” **2**The woman answered him, “{No,} {God said that} we may eat fruit from {any of} the tree{s} in the garden, **3**except fruit from the tree that is in the center of the garden. He commanded {us} not to eat that fruit or even touch it, because if we do, we will die!” **4**But the snake said to the woman, “{That is not true.} You will not die. **5**Actually, God knows that as soon as you eat {fruit} from that tree, you will understand new things, so that you will know {what is} right and {what is} wrong just like God does.” **6**The woman saw that the tree{’s fruit} {looked} good to eat and that the tree {itself} was {very} beautiful. She also wanted {to eat} the fruit so that it would make her wise. So she picked some of the fruit {off the tree} and ate it. She also gave {some of the fruit} to her husband, {who was} {there} with her, and he ate {it} {too}. **7**Suddenly they both understood new things, and they realized that their bodies {were} bare. So they sewed {some} fig {tree} leaves together and made clothes for themselves {to cover their nakedness}.

8{Late that afternoon,} during the cool time of the day, the man and his wife heard Yahweh God’s voice as he walked in the garden, but they hid from him behind some tree{s} in the garden. **9**So Yahweh God called {out} to the man, “{Adam,} where are you?” **10**The man replied, “I heard the sound of you {walking} in the garden, but I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid {from you}.” **11**Then Yahweh God asked, “Who told you that you were naked? Did you {disobey me and} eat {fruit} from the tree from which I ordered you not to eat?” **12**The man replied, “The woman whom you put here {to be} with me, she {is the one who} gave me some of that fruit, so I ate {it}.” **13**Then

Yahweh God asked the woman, “What did you do?” The woman replied, “The snake tricked me, so I ate {some of the fruit}.” **14**So Yahweh God said to the snake, “Because you did that,

I am cursing you more {severely} than all the livestock

and all the animals in the fields!

{As a result,} you must crawl {along the ground} on your belly,

and you will eat dust {with your food}

for as long as you live.

15Besides that, I will cause you and your descendants to be enemies

with the woman and her descendants.

{In fact,} her descendant will crush your head,

and you will bite his heel.”

16{Then} God said to the woman,

“I will greatly increase how much you suffer when you bear children,

{yes,} you will suffer {much pain} when you give birth.

But you will {still} desire {to be with} your husband,

and he will dominate you.”

17Then God said to Adam, “You did what your wife said and ate {fruit} from the tree that I commanded you not to eat {any fruit} from.

Because of what you did, I have cursed the ground.

{As a result,} for as long as you live,

you will have to work {very} hard and suffer {to grow enough food} to eat.

18In fact, thorn plants and thistle plants {and other weeds} will grow from the ground

{and make it difficult} for you to grow {enough} crops in your fields for food.

19You will have to {work hard and} sweat a lot

in order to {produce} {enough} food to eat,

until you {die and} again become dirt,

which I created you from.

Yes, {I created} you out of dirt,

so dirt is what you will become again {after you die}.”

20Then Adam named his wife Eve, {which means “living,”} because she would be the mother of everyone who would ever live. **21**Then Yahweh God made {some} clothes out of {animal} skins for Adam and his wife, and he put the clothes on them.

22Then Yahweh God said {to himself}, “Look! The man {and his wife} have become like one of us, so that they know {what is} good and {what is} evil. So now we must do something so that they do not also pick and eat {fruit} from the tree that gives people {eternal} life, which will make them live forever!” **23**Then Yahweh God expelled the man {and his wife} from Eden Garden to work the ground which he had made them from. **24**After he expelled them, he stationed to the east {side} of the garden {some} {powerful} cherubim {angels} and a burning sword that was swinging around in all directions to keep everyone away from the path to the tree whose fruit makes people live {forever}.

Chapter 4

Cain Kills Abel — the First Murder

1Then Adam had {marital} relations with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to {a son they named} Cain, {which means “obtained.”} {They named him that} because she said, “Yahweh has enabled me to obtain a son!” **2**Then Eve also gave birth to Cain’s brother {whom they named} Abel. {When they grew up,} Abel became a shepherd, and Cain became a {crop} farmer. **3**As time went by, one day Cain gave some of the crops {that he had grown} in his fields to Yahweh as a gift {to honor him}. **4**Abel also gave {a gift} {to Yahweh}, {but what he gave was} some of the firstborn animals from his flock{s}, including some of their best parts. Yahweh was pleased with Abel and his gift. **5**However, he was not pleased with Cain or his gift. So Cain became extremely angry, and he frowned. **6**Then Yahweh asked him, “Why are you so angry? And why are you frowning? **7**If you do {what is} right, I will accept {you} {and your offering}. But if you do not do {what is} right, then sin {is like a fierce animal that} is waiting outside your door {to attack you}. It wants {to control} you, but you must control it {so that you do not sin}.”

8But {after that,} Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field {to work} {together}.” So {they went out} to the field, and while they were there, Cain attacked his brother and murdered him.

9Later Yahweh asked Cain, “Where {is} your brother Abel?” Cain responded, “I don’t know {where he is}. Is it my job to take care of my brother?” **10**Then Yahweh said {to him}, “You have done a terrible thing! I see your brother’s blood on the ground, and I must punish you {for killing him}! **11**So from now on I am cursing you {so that you will not be able to grow food} from the ground, which is where your brother’s blood spilled out when you murdered him. **12**Whenever you {try to} farm the ground, it will no longer produce good crops for you. {From now on,} you will be an outcast who wanders around on the earth {without a permanent home}.”

13Cain replied to Yahweh, “You are punishing me more {severely} than I can endure. **14**Look, you have now banished me from {farming} the ground, and I will be far away from you. I will be a homeless fugitive on the earth, so that whoever sees me will kill me!” **15**Yahweh replied to him, “So then, {I will warn everyone that} I will take vengeance on whoever kills you {and punish him} seven times more {severely} {than I am punishing you}!” Then he put a mark on Cain to warn everyone who met him not to kill him. **16**Then Cain left Yahweh’s presence and lived in the region of Nod, {which means “wandering,”} {which was} east of {the region of} Eden.

Cain’s Descendants

17Then Cain had {marital} relations with his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to {a son they named} Enoch. {At that time} Cain was building a city, so he named the city after his son Enoch. **18**When Enoch {grew up,} he had {a son named} Irad. Then Irad had {a son named} Mehujael. Then Mehujael had {a son named} Methushael. Then Methushael had {a son named} Lamech.

19When Lamech {grew up,} he married two wives. His first wife’s name was Adah, and his other wife’s name was Zillah. **20**Adah gave birth to {a son named} Jabal. He {grew up and} became the first of {all} those who live {in}

portable shelters and raise livestock {for a living}. **21**His brother's name was Jubal. He became the first of all {those} who play harps and flutes.

22{Lamech's other wife} Zillah also gave birth to {a son named} Tubal Cain. He {was the first of all those who} make all {kinds} of tools {and other things} out of bronze and iron. Tubal Cain had a sister {whose name was} Naamah.

23{One day,} Lamech bragged to his {two} wives,

"Adah and Zillah, listen to what I have to say.

My wives, listen to this:

I killed a young man for wounding me!

In fact, {I killed} that man {just} because he bruised me.

24God will avenge Cain seven times,

but {I,} Lamech {avenge myself} 77 times!"

People Start to Worship God Using His Name Yahweh

25Then Adam had {marital} relations with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son, and she named him Seth, {which means "given."} {She named him that} because {when he was born,} {she had said}, "God has given me another child to replace Abel, whom Cain killed." **26**Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh.

During that time people began to worship {God} by using His name Yahweh.

Chapter 5

The Descendants from Adam to Noah

1Here {is} the {family} record of Adam and his descendants: On the day when God created human beings, he made them to be like himself. **2**He {also} created them {to be} male and female, and on the {same} day that he created them, he blessed them and named them "human beings."

3When Adam was 130 years old, he had {a son} who was like him in many ways, and he named him Seth. **4**After Seth's birth, Adam lived {another} 800 years. He {also} had {other} sons as well as daughters. **5**So Adam lived a total of 930 years, and {then} he died.

6When Seth was 105 years old, he had {a son named} Enosh. **7**After Enosh's birth, Seth lived {another} 807 years. He {also} had {other} sons as well as daughters. **8**So Seth lived a total of 912 years, and {then} he died.

9When Enosh was ninety years old, he had {a son named} Kenan. **10**After Kenan's birth, Enosh lived {another} 815 years. He {also} had {other} sons as well as daughters. **11**So Enosh lived a total of 905 years, and {then} he died.

12When Kenan was seventy years old, he had {a son named} Mahalalel. **13**After Mahalalel's birth, Kenan lived {another} 840 years. He {also} had {other} sons as well as daughters. **14**So Kenan lived a total of 910 years, and {then} he died.

15When Mahalalel was sixty-five years old, he had {a son named} Jared. **16**After Jared's birth, Mahalalel lived {another} 830 years. He {also} had {other} sons as well as daughters. **17**So Mahalalel lived a total of 895 years, and {then} he died.

18When Jared was 162 years old, he had {a son named} Enoch. **19**After Enoch's birth, Jared lived {another} 800 years. He {also} had {other} sons as well as daughters. **20**So Jared lived a total of 962 years, and {then} he died.

21When Enoch was sixty-five years old, he had {a son named} Methuselah. **22**After Methuselah's birth, Enoch lived {in a close relationship} with God for {another} 300 years. He {also} had {other} sons as well as daughters. **23**So Enoch lived a total of 365 years. **24**Then while he was {still} living {in a close relationship} with God, {suddenly} he was no longer {on earth}, because God had taken him away {to be with him}.

25When Methuselah was 187 years old, he had {a son named} Lamech. **26**After Lamech's birth, Methuselah lived {another} 782 years. He {also} had {other} sons as well as daughters. **27**So Methuselah lived a total of 969 years, and {then} he died.

28When Lamech was 182 years old, he had a son, **29**and he named him Noah {which means "rest,"} {because} he said, "This {son} will give us rest from the difficult work that we have to do because Yahweh has cursed the ground." **30**After Noah's birth, Lamech lived {another} 595 years. He {also} had {other} sons as well as daughters. **31**So Lamech lived a total of 777 years, {and} then he died.

32After Noah was 500 years old, he had {sons whose names were} Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Chapter 6

God Destroys the World with a Flood

People on the Earth Become More and More Evil

1Now it happened that people began to multiply {in number} all over the earth, and they were having daughters. **2**{When those girls grew up,} the sons of God saw that they {were} beautiful, so they chose any {of them} that they wanted and married them. **3**Then Yahweh said {to himself}, "My Spirit will not put up with human beings forever, because they {are} very corrupt. I will give them 120 years {to repent}."

4{People called} the Nephilim lived on the earth during that time and also later on. {That happened} when the sons of God had relations with the daughters of human beings, and those women gave birth to children for them. Their children were {the Nephilim, who were} the famous mighty men who lived long ago.

5Yahweh saw that the people on the earth had become very evil, and that everything they thought about and desired {was} completely evil all the time. **6**As a result, he regretted that he had made them {to live} on the earth, and he felt very sad. **7**So he said {to himself}, "I will completely destroy from the earth {all} the people whom I created. {In fact}, {I will destroy} {not only} {all} the people, but also {all} the animals, including the creatures that crawl {on the ground} and the birds {that fly} in the sky, because I regret that I {ever} made them." **8**But Yahweh was pleased with Noah.

Noah Prepares for the Flood

9Here is {more of} the history about Noah and his descendants: Noah {was} a man who did what was right. Out of all the people living at that time, he was the only one {whom God considered} blameless, {and} he lived in a close relationship with God. **10**Eventually Noah had {his} three sons, {whose names were} Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

11Now {the people on} the earth had become wicked according to God's standards, and all over the earth they were doing violent things. **12**God saw how wicked {everyone on} the earth had become, because all the people on the

earth were {continually} behaving in evil ways. **13**So he said to Noah, “I am going to destroy all people, because all over the earth they are doing violent things. In fact, I am going to destroy them and {everything else on} the earth {too}. **14**{Therefore} {you must} build a {very} large boat for yourself {and your family} out of the best wood {for building boats}. Build rooms inside the boat, and seal it inside and outside with tar {to keep water out}. **15**You must make the boat like this: It {must be} 140 meters long, twenty-three meters wide, and fourteen meters high. **16**Make a half-meter high opening between the top of the walls of the ark and its roof {all the way around}, {to let light and air in}. Put a door in the side of the boat, and build three levels {on the inside}. **17**Listen {carefully} to me: I am going to bring a flood over the {whole} earth, which will destroy all the creatures under the sky that breathe {air}. {As a result,} every {living} thing that {is} on land will die! **18**But I will make a {special} agreement between me and you, so you must get on board the boat, and {take} your wife, your sons, and your sons’ wives with you. **19**You must also take into the boat two of every {kind of} animal, so that they stay alive with you. Each pair must include {one} male and {one} female. **20**Pairs of every kind of bird and every kind of animal, including every kind of creature that moves on the ground, will come to you so that you keep them alive {in the boat}. **21**You must {also} gather all the different kinds of food that people and animals eat and store it {on the boat} with you, so that there will be {enough} food for you {and your family} and for {all} the animals.” **22**So, {that is what} Noah did; he did everything exactly as God had commanded him {to do}.

Chapter 7

Yahweh Sends the Flood

1Then {after they had finished building the boat,} Yahweh commanded Noah, “You and your entire family must go into the boat, because I know {that} you {are} {the only one} among the people living today {who is} living rightly according to my standards. **2**Take with you seven male and female pairs of every {kind of} pure animal, and {one} male and female pair of {every kind of} impure animal. **3**Also {take} seven male and female pairs of {every kind of} bird {that flies} in the sky, so that {later} their offspring will live all over the earth. **4**{You must do that,} because seven days from today I will make it rain {continuously} {all} over the earth {for} forty days and nights. In that way, I will completely destroy from the earth every living creature that I have made.” **5**Then Noah did everything {exactly} as Yahweh had commanded him {to do}.

6Noah was 600 years old when the flood covered the earth. **7**{That is when} he and his wife, and his sons and their wives went together into the boat so that they would not die in the flood. **8**{Also,} {every kind of} pure animal and {every kind of} impure animal and {every kind of} bird, {including} every {kind of creature} that lives on land, **9**came in pairs to Noah {and went} into the boat. {They were} male and female {pairs}, which was exactly what God had commanded him {to take along}.

10So it happened {that} when the seven days {that God had spoken about} had passed, water started to flood the earth. **11**When Noah was 600 years old, on the seventeenth day of the second month {of the year}, on that {very} day all the springs in the deep ocean started pouring out water. {God also caused} the water in the sky to start pouring down, as if he had opened {huge} floodgates {in the sky}, **12**so that it rained {continuously} {all} over the earth {for} forty days and nights.

13{So it was that} on the same day {that the flood started}, Noah and his sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, along with his wife and his sons’ three wives {all} entered the boat. **14**They had with them every kind of living creature, including every kind of livestock and every {other} kind of creature that lives on the land, and every kind of bird {and} everything {else} that flies. **15**Pairs of every {kind of} living thing that breathes {air} came to Noah {and went} into the boat. **16**The animals that went into {the boat} {were} male and female {pairs} from every {kind of} living thing, which was exactly what God had commanded Noah {to take along}. Then {after they were all inside,} Yahweh closed the door {of the boat} behind them.

17{For} forty days {and forty nights} the flood kept getting deeper and deeper {all} over the earth, and as the water rose, it lifted up the boat so that it floated {on the water} above the ground. **18**So the floodwaters continued to rise and get much deeper {all} over the earth, while the boat floated {safely} on the water. **19**Eventually the water became so deep on the earth that {even} all the highest mountains everywhere under the sky were under water. **20**{In fact,} the water rose {at least} seven meters above {the tops of} the {highest} mountains, so that they were {completely} under water. **21**Then all the creatures that lived on land died. {That} included {all} the birds, the livestock, and the {other} living creatures, including every {kind of} creature that lived in large groups on the earth, as well as all the people. **22**Every living creature that breathed air and {lived} on dry land died. **23**That is how Yahweh completely destroyed all the living creatures that {were} on the earth, including {all} people and livestock and {all the other} creatures that lived {on the land} and also the birds {that flew} in the sky. Yes, he completely destroyed everything {that lived} on the earth, so that the only ones who were still alive were Noah and his family and the animals that were with them in the boat.

God Causes the Flood to Go Away

24{Deep} water continued to cover the {entire} world {for} 150 days.

Chapter 8

1But God never forgot Noah {and his family} and all the animals, both wild and tame, that {were} with them in the boat. So he caused a wind to blow over {the water that was covering} the earth, so that the water {started to} go down. **2**{He also caused} the springs in the deep {ocean} to stop {gushing out water}, and {he caused} the water to stop pouring from the sky, so that it stopped raining. **3**Then the water steadily went down from {the surface of} the land. After the 150 days {had passed}, the water had gone down **4**so {much} that on the seventeenth day of the seventh month {of the year}, the boat came to rest on {one of} the mountains in the Ararat {mountain range}. **5**The floodwaters continued to go down until on the first {day} of the tenth month {of the year}, the peaks of the {surrounding} mountains became visible {above the water}.

6After forty {more} days {had passed}, Noah opened a window in the boat that he had made, **7**and he released a raven, which kept flying back and forth until the water had dried up {more} from the land. **8**Meanwhile Noah {also} released a dove from the boat to find out if the water had gone down from the land. **9**But water was {still} covering the entire earth, so the dove did not find anywhere to land and rest. Then it returned to Noah in the boat, and Noah reached out, caught it, and brought it {back} into the boat. **10**Noah waited seven more days, then he released the dove from the boat again. **11**That evening the dove returned to him, and he saw that {it had} a fresh green olive {tree} leaf in its beak! That is how Noah realized that the water had gone down {further} from the land. **12**Then he waited seven more days and he released the dove {again}, but {this time} it did not come back to him again.

13So it was, when {Noah was} 601 years old, on the first {day} of the first month {of the year}, the water had {almost} dried up from the land. So Noah took off {part of} the roof of the boat and looked {around}, and he saw that {much of} the land's surface was {almost} dry. **14**Then by the twenty-seventh day of the second month {of the year}, the land had dried off.

15Then God commanded Noah, **16**"Come out of the boat, together with your wife, your sons, and your sons' wives. **17**Bring out all the animals that {are} with you, all of them, including the birds, tame animals, and every {other} animal that moves on land. Then they can live all over the earth; {yes,} they will have many young and increase {in number} {all} over the earth." **18**So Noah came out {of the boat}, along with his wife and his sons and their wives. **19**All the animals, {including} all the animals that crawl and all the birds {and} everything {else} that lives on land, {also} came out of the boat in groups of their own kind.

Yahweh Makes a Covenant with Mankind and All Other Living Things

20Then Noah made an altar {out of large stones} {to offer sacrifices} to Yahweh. Next he chose {some} of every {kind of} animal and bird that is acceptable to sacrifice, and he {killed them and} burned {their bodies} on the altar as an offering {to Yahweh} {to worship him}. **21**Yahweh smelled the aroma {of the offerings} and was pleased, and he thought to himself, “Never again will I curse the ground because of mankind{’s sins}, {even} though everything they desire and think about {is} evil from the time they are children. And never again will I destroy all living {creatures} the way I {just} did.

22As long as the earth {still} exists,

{each year} there will always be a season to plant seeds and a season to harvest {crops},

as well as cold weather and hot weather,

summer and winter,

and day and night.”

Chapter 9

1Then God caused Noah and his sons to prosper by saying to them, “Have many children so that you {and your descendants} will become numerous and live all over the earth. **2**Every living creature on the earth will be afraid and terrified of you, including every bird {that flies} in the sky, {along} with every creature that moves on land, and all the fish in the ocean. I have put them {all} under your authority. **3**{From now on} every creature that is alive and moves is yours {to eat} as food. In the same way that {I provided you} green plants {for food}, {now} I provide you everything {for food}. **4**However, you must never eat meat that still has its blood {in it}, which made it live. **5**Also, I definitely require that anyone who murders someone must die. {In fact,} if any animal {kills a human being}, I require that it must die. {That is also true} for human beings: If anyone {murders} another person, I require that he must die.

6{That’s right,} you must put to death

anyone who murders a human being,

because God made human beings

to be like himself.

7“Now {as for} you, have many children so that you {and your descendants} will become numerous. Spread out all over the earth and become numerous everywhere.”

8Then God said to Noah and his sons, **9**“Listen {carefully} to me: I am making my agreement with you and your descendants. **10**{It is} also with all the living creatures that {are} with you, including the birds, the livestock, and all the {other} living creatures on the earth {that are} with you. {That includes} all {those} that came out of the ark and all the living creatures {that will ever live} on the earth. **11**My agreement that I am making with you is that never again will all living things die from a flood. I will not use a flood ever again to destroy {everything on} the earth.”

12Then God continued, “This {is} how I will show {everyone} that I have made this agreement with you and with all the living creatures that {are} with you, as well as with all the people and animals that will ever live: **13**I will put my rainbow among the clouds {in the sky} to remind {everyone} that I have made this agreement with {every creature that lives on} the earth. **14**So whenever I cause clouds to form {in the sky} above the earth and a rainbow appears in the clouds, **15**then I will not forget {to keep} my agreement that I have established with you and with all living creatures of every kind. {I promise} that I will never again use a flood to destroy all living creatures. **16**Yes,

whenever a rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and keep {my} permanent agreement which I have established with all people and all animals that {live} on the earth."

17Then God {concluded} by saying to Noah, "A rainbow {is} what I will use to remind {everyone} that I have made this agreement with all the people and animals that {live} on the earth."

Noah and His Three Sons After the Flood

18Noah's sons who came out of the boat {after the flood} were Shem, Ham, and Japheth; it was Ham who {was} Canaan's father. **19**It was the descendants of Noah's three sons who populated the entire earth {again}.

20After a while, Noah, who was a farmer, planted {some} grape vines {and made wine from the grapes}. **21**Then {one day} he drank {too much of} the wine, so that he became drunk and was {lying} naked inside his tent. **22**Ham, {who was} Canaan's father, saw that his father was naked, and he went outside and told his two brothers {about it}. **23**However, Shem and Japheth took a robe, and held it {between them} at shoulder level and walked backward {into the tent} and covered their father's naked body {with it}. {As they did that,} they kept their faces turned away {from him} so that they would not see him naked.

24Later Noah woke up from being drunk, and he found out that his youngest son {Ham} had dishonored him. **25**So he exclaimed {about him},

"I {ask God to} curse {Ham's son} Canaan!

Canaan will be the lowest servant for his relatives."

26Then Noah said,

"Praise Yahweh, {who is} the God {who takes care} of Shem!

May God cause Canaan to be Shem's servant.

27I {also} ask God to give Japheth much {land}

and enable him to live together {in peace} with Shem.

May God {also} cause Canaan to be Japheth's servant."

28From {the time that} the flood {began}, Noah lived {another} 350 years, **29**so that he lived a total of 950 years before he died.

Chapter 10

The Descendants of Noah's Sons

1This is the record of {the names of} Noah's sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and the descendants they had after the flood {was over}.

Japheth's Descendants

2Japheth's sons {were} Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.

3Gomer's sons {were} Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.

4Javan's sons {were} Elishah and Tarshish, {and he was the ancestor of} the Kittites and the Dodanites.

5From Japheth's {descendants} came the people groups who lived {in regions} near the sea. They moved to
different places {and settled} in their {own} territories, and each {group} spoke its own language. They each had
their {own} families, which {grew and} became their own people groups.

Ham's Descendants

6Ham's sons {were} Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan.

7Cush's sons {were} Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabtecah. And Raamah's sons {were} Sheba and Dedan.
8Cush {also} had {a son named} Nimrod, who was the first {person} on earth to be a powerful {ruler}. **9**He was
{also} a great hunter whom Yahweh blessed. That is why people say {about other great men}, "{That man is} like
Nimrod, a great hunter whom Yahweh blessed." **10**Nimrod started ruling as king {over} {the cities of} Babel, Erech,
Akkad, and Calneh, {which were} {all} {located} in the region of Shinar. **11**From the land of Shinar he went to {the
region of} Assyria, where he built {the cities of} Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah, **12**and Resen, {which is located}
between {the cities of} Nineveh and the great city of Calah.

13Mizraim was the ancestor of the Ludites, Anamites, Lehabites, Naphtuhites, **14**Pathrusites, Casluhites, and
Caphtorites. The Philistines descended from the Casluhites.

15Canaan had Sidon {who was} his firstborn {son}. {He was} also {the ancestor of} the Hittites, **16**Jebusites,
Amorites, Girgashites, **17**Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, **18**Arvadites, Zemarites, and Hamathites. Later, those families {that
descended} from Canaan spread out, **19**so that the territory where they lived reached from {the city of} Sidon {in
the north}, all the way {south} toward {the city of} Gerar to {the city of} Gaza, {then} as far {east} as {the cities of}
Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, all the way to {the city of} Lasha.

20Those {people} {were} Ham's descendants and each one had his own family. Each family {grew and} became its
own people group that spoke its own language and lived in its own territory.

Shem's Descendants

21Shem also had {some} sons. He {was} the ancestor of all the descendants of Eber, and his older brother was
Japheth. **22**Shem's sons {were} Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram.

23Aram's sons {were} Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash.

24Arpachshad had {a son named} Shelah, then Shelah had {a son named} Eber. **25**Then Eber had two sons. The
name of the first {one} {was} Peleg, {which means "division,"} because during his lifetime {the people on} the earth
divided {into separate groups} {and spread out everywhere}. Peleg's {younger} brother's name {was} Joktan.
26Joktan had {sons named} Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, **27**Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, **28**Obal, Abimael,
Sheba, **29**Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. Those {were} all Joktan's sons. **30**The region where they {and their descendants}
lived reached from {the city of} Mesha {in the west} all the way to {the city of} Sephar, {which is in} the hill country
in the east.

31Those {people} {are} Shem's descendants and each one had his own family. Each family {grew and} became its
own people group that spoke its own language and lived in its own territory.

32{All} those family groups descended from Noah's sons. Each family group had its own descendants and became
its own people group. In fact, after the flood {all} the people groups on the earth descended from them and spread
out everywhere.

Chapter 11

The Tower of Babel

1Now {at first,} all {the people on} the earth spoke the same language, so that everyone understood each other. **2**As time passed, they moved from the eastern {regions} and {eventually} came to a wide, flat valley in the region of Shinar and stayed there. **3**Then they urged each other, “Come on, let us {work together and} make bricks {from clay} and put them in fire to make them hard.” They used bricks {to build with} instead of stone, and they used tar {between the bricks} instead of mortar. **4**Then they urged {each other}, “Come on, we should {work together and} build a city for us {to live in} that has a {very} tall building that reaches high into the sky. {That way} we will become famous, and we will not separate from each other {and live} all over the earth.”

5But {one day} Yahweh came down {from heaven} and looked at the city and the {very} tall building that the people were building. **6**Then he said, “Look, they are one people {group}, and they all speak the same language. This {is} {only} the beginning of what they can do {together}. Soon they will be able to do anything they plan to do. **7**{So} we must go down there {now} and mix up their language so that they are not able to understand what they say to each other.” **8**In that way, Yahweh caused the people to leave from there and live in different places all over the world, so that they had to stop building the city {and the tall building}. **9**That is why the name of the city is Babel, {which means “mixed up,”} because that is where Yahweh mixed up the language that everyone on the earth shared, and {in that way} he made them spread out from there all over the earth.

The History about Abraham 11:10-25:18

Shem’s Descendants down to Abram

10This is the record of Shem’s descendants:

Two years after the flood {began}, when Shem was 100 years old, he had {a son named} Arpachshad. **11**After Arpachshad was born, Shem lived {another} 500 years. He {also} had {other} sons, as well as daughters.

12When Arpachshad was thirty-five years old, he had {a son named} Shelah. **13**After Shelah was born, Arpachshad lived {another} 403 years. He {also} had {other} sons, as well as daughters.

14When Shelah was thirty years old, he had {a son named} Eber. **15**After Eber was born, Shelah lived {another} 403 years. He {also} had {other} sons, as well as daughters.

16When Eber was thirty-four years old, he had {a son named} Peleg. **17**After Peleg was born, Eber lived {another} 430 years. He {also} had {other} sons, as well as daughters.

18When Peleg was thirty years old, he had {a son named} Reu. **19**After Reu was born, Peleg lived {another} 209 years. He {also} had {other} sons, as well as daughters.

20When Reu was thirty-two years old, he had {a son named} Serug. **21**After Serug was born, Reu lived {another} 207 years. He {also} had {other} sons, as well as daughters.

22When Serug was thirty years old, he had {a son named} Nahor. **23**After Nahor was born, Serug lived {another} 200 years. He {also} had {other} sons, as well as daughters.

24When Nahor was twenty-nine years old, he had {a son named} Terah. **25**After Terah was born, Nahor lived {another} 119 years. He {also} had {other} sons, as well as daughters.

26After Terah was seventy years old, he had {sons whose names were} Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

Terah's Children, including Abram

27Here is the history about Terah and his descendants: Terah's sons were Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran had a
son {whose name was} Lot. **28**While his father was still alive, Haran died in the land where he was born, in {the city
of} Ur where the Chaldean people lived. **29**Meanwhile Abram and Nahor each married a wife. Abram's wife was
named Sarai, and Nahor's wife was Milcah. Milcah and {her sister} Iscah were the daughters of {Nahor's brother}
Haran. **30**But Sarai was not able to become pregnant, {so} she did not have any children.

31Then {one day,} Terah gathered his son Abram and his grandson Lot, {who was} Haran's son, and his daughter-in-
law Sarai, who was Abram's wife, and they {all} left from {the city of} Ur where the Chaldean people lived to travel
to the region of Canaan. But when they arrived at {the city of} Haran, they decided to live there {instead}. **32**Then
{many years later,} when Terah was 205 years old, he died {there} in {the city of} Haran.

Chapter 12

God Tells Abram to Move to Canaan

1{One day} Yahweh commanded Abram, "You must move away from your homeland and your relatives, including
your father's family, {and move} to the land that I will guide you to.

2I will make you {and your descendants} become an important people group,

and I will cause you {all} to prosper.

I will make you well-known,

and you {and your descendants} will bless {many people}.

3I will bless everyone who blesses you,

but I will curse anyone who curses you.

I will bless all the people on the earth through you."

4So Abram left {the city of Haran} exactly as Yahweh had commanded him {to do}, and {his nephew} Lot went with
him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left from there. **5**He took {with him} his wife Sarai and his nephew
Lot and everything that they owned, including servants {and everything else} they had acquired in {the city of}
Haran, and they {all} started traveling to the region of Canaan. When they arrived there, **6**they traveled through
that region as far as the city of Shechem, to Moreh's oak tree. At that time the Canaanites were {still living} in that
land, **7**but Yahweh came to Abram and said {to him}, "I will give this land to your descendants." So Abram built an
altar {out of large stones} in that place {and burned sacrifices on it} to worship Yahweh, because Yahweh had
appeared to him {there}.

8From {the city of} Shechem, Abram {and his family} moved {south} to the hill country that was east of {the town
of} Bethel. They set up their tents between Bethel to the west and {the town of} Ai to the east. There Abram built
another altar {and burned sacrifices on it} to worship Yahweh, and he addressed Yahweh by {his} name as he
worshiped him. **9**Then Abram {and his family} moved from place to place {southward} until they reached the Negev
{Desert}.

Abram and Sarai Go to {the Country of} Egypt {to Escape a Famine}

10Now there was a serious food shortage in that region. It was so severe that Abram {and his family} {left there
and} went down to {the country of} Egypt to live for a while. **11**Just before they arrived in Egypt, Abram said to his

wife Sarai, “Please listen {to me}: you {are} a very beautiful woman. **12**When the people in Egypt see you {with me}, they will say that you are my wife. Then they will kill me and let you live {so that they can take you}. **13**{So} please tell people {that} you {are} my sister so that they will treat me well because of you and let me live.”

14That is {exactly} what happened: When Abram {and his family} arrived in {the country of} Egypt, the people there noticed that Sarai was {truly} very beautiful. **15**When some officers under Pharaoh {the king of Egypt} noticed her, they highly recommended her to him. So he had them bring her to his palace {to be one of his wives}. **16**The king thought that Abram was Sarai’s brother, so he treated him well. He gave him many sheep and cattle, as well as men and women servants, male and female donkeys, and camels.

17But since {King} Pharaoh had taken Abram’s wife Sarai, Yahweh afflicted the king and his family {with} severe illnesses. **18**So the king summoned Abram {before him} and said {to him}, “You have treated me very badly! You should have told me that Sarai {is} your wife! **19**You should not have said that she {is} your sister, so that I ended up taking her to be my wife! So now, here is your wife. Take {her} and leave {my country}!” **20**Then {King} Pharaoh ordered {some of} his soldiers to make sure that Abram left, so they forced him to leave {the country}, along with his wife and everything that he owned.

Chapter 13

Abram and Lot Go Separate Ways

1So Abram left {the country of} Egypt {and traveled} {back} to the Negev {Desert}. {He took} with him his wife and everything that they owned, and also {his nephew} Lot. **2**{By that time} Abram {had become} very rich, so that he owned {many} livestock and {much} silver and gold. **3**From the Negev {Desert} he {and his family} traveled from place to place {northward} {until they came} to {the town of} Bethel, to the place where he had lived in tents before, between {the towns of} Bethel and Ai. **4**{That was} the {same} place where he had previously built an altar. There {again} he {sacrificed animals on the altar and} worshiped Yahweh by name.

5Lot was traveling with {his uncle} Abram, and he {and his family} also owned many sheep and cattle, as well as {many} tents. **6**In fact, there was not enough land to have enough food and water for both families {and their animals} if they lived in the same area. They each owned so many servants and animals that it was not possible for them to {all} live near each other. **7**As a result, the men who took care of Abram’s livestock and the men who took care of Lot’s livestock started to argue with each other. Besides that, the Canaanites and the Perizzites were {also} living in that land at that time.

8Finally {one day} Abram said to Lot, “Please, since we {are} close relatives, we need to do something so that you and I and our herdsmen will not argue. **9**Look, the entire land is available to you {to choose from}. Please {choose where you want to live, and} let’s live in separate places. If {you choose} {the land to} the left {of here}, then I will take {the land to} the right. Or if {you choose} {the land to} the right {of here}, then I will take {the land to} the left.”

10Lot looked {all} around and he noticed that the entire Jordan {River} Valley, all the way to {the town of} Zoar, had plenty of water. {It was lush and green} like the garden that Yahweh had planted or like the country of Egypt. {That is what it was like} before Yahweh destroyed {the cities of} Sodom and Gomorrah, {which were also in that valley}. **11**So Lot chose the entire Jordan {River} Valley for himself. Then he {left Abram and} moved to the east {to live there}. After that, Abram and Lot lived in separate places. **12**Abram stayed {where he was} in the region of Canaan, while Lot lived {in another part of the region} among the cities in the {Jordan River} valley and {eventually} moved his tents to {the city of} Sodom {and stayed there}. **13**But the people {who lived} in {the city of} Sodom {were} extremely wicked and were {always} sinning against Yahweh.

God Promises to Give Abram {the Land of} Canaan and Many Descendants

14After Lot had left Abram, Yahweh said to Abram, “Look {all} around you from the place where you {live}. Look
north, south, east, and west. **15**All the land that you see I will give to you and your descendants {to own} forever.
16In fact, I will give you so many descendants that they will be as {numerous as} the {specks of} dust on the earth.
No one will be able to count how many descendants you have, just as no one can count how many {specks of} dust
there are. **17**{So now,} start walking through the land {in all directions}. Go throughout the entire land {and look it
over}, because I am giving it {all} to you.” **18**Then Abram {obeyed Yahweh and} moved his tents and settled near the
oak trees {on the land} owned by {a man named} Mamre, near {the city of} Hebron. There he built an altar {out of
stones} {and burned sacrifices on it} to {thank and} worship Yahweh.

Chapter 14

Abram Rescues Lot from Four Kings

1During that time Amraphel was the king over {the land of} Shinar, Arioch was the king over Ellasar, Chedorlaomer
was the king over {the land of} Elam, and Tidal was the king over the Goiim {people}. **2**Those {four} kings {joined
forces and} went to war against {five other kings, including} Bera {who was} the king over {the city of} Sodom,
Birsha {who was} the king over {the city of} Gomorrah, Shinab {who was} the king over {the city of} Admah,
Shemeber {who was} the king over {the city of} Zeboyim, and the king over {the town of} Bela, which {is also called}
Zoar. **3**Those {five kings} all united their armies {as allies} {and fought against the four kings} in the Siddim Valley,
where the Salt Sea {is now}.

4{For} twelve years the five kings had paid tribute to {King} Chedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they started to
rebel {against him}. **5**Then during the fourteenth year {King} Chedorlaomer and the {three} kings who {were} his
allies {united their armies and} went {to war} {against all their enemies}. {First} they defeated the Raphaites in {the
city of} Ashteroth-Karnaim, then the Zuzites in {the city of} Ham, the Emites in {the city of} Shaveh-Kiriathaim, **6**and
the Horites {who lived} in the Seir Mountains {all the way} to {the city of} El Paran, which {is located} near the
desert. **7**Next those {four} kings {and their armies} turned around and went to {the city of} En Mishpat, which {is
also called} Kadesh. They conquered the entire territory where the Amalekites lived, as well as the Amorites, who
lived in {the city of} Hazezon Tamar.

8Then the king over {the city of} Sodom, the king over {the city of} Gomorrah, the king over {the city of} Admah, the
king over {the city of} Zeboiim, and the king over {the town of} Bela, which {is also called} Zoar, marched out {with
their armies} into the Siddim Valley and got ready to fight **9**against Chedorlaomer {who was} the king over {the
land of} Elam, Tidal {who was} the king over the Goiim, Amraphel {who was} the king over {the land of} Shinar, and
Arioch {who was} the king over {the kingdom of} Ellasar. {Then} the four kings attacked the five {kings} {and started
defeating them}.

10Now there were many tar pits in the Siddim Valley. As the kings over {the cities of} Sodom and Gomorrah {and
their soldiers} were running away {from the battle}, some {of their soldiers} died there {in the tar pits}. Those who
escaped ran away to the mountains {to hide}. **11**Then the four kings seized all the {people’s} belongings in {the
cities of} Sodom and Gomorrah, including all their food, and carried it away. **12**They also carried off Abram’s
nephew Lot and his belongings, since he was living in {the city of} Sodom.

13But someone {from Sodom} escaped {from the battle} and went to Abram the Hebrew and reported {to him}
{what had happened}. {At that time} Abram was {still} living near the oak trees that were owned by Mamre the
Amorite, {who was} the brother of Eshcol and Aner. Those {three} men had made a pact with Abram {to be his
allies}. **14**When Abram heard that {the four kings} had captured his nephew {Lot}, he called together 318 of his
servants who had been born in his household and were skilled warriors. Then {together with his allies} they chased
after {the four kings and their armies} all the way to {the town of} Dan. **15**There during the night Abram and his
men divided {into groups}, {surprise} attacked the {four} kings {and their soldiers}, and defeated them. Then they

chased them as far as {the town of} Hobah, which {is located} north of {the city of} Damascus. **16**As a result, Abram recovered all the {people's} belongings {that the four kings had taken}. He also rescued his nephew Lot and his belongings, as well as the women and {all} the other people {whom the kings had captured}.

Melchizedek Blesses Abram

17After Abram defeated {King} Chedorlaomer and the {other} {three} kings who were Chedorlaomer's allies, he started to return {home}. When he reached the Shaveh Valley, which {is also called} the King's Valley, the king over {the city of} Sodom came there and welcomed him. **18**Melchizedek {who was} the king over {the city of} Salem {also came there, and he} brought food and wine {for Abram and his men to eat and drink}. {King} Melchizedek {was also} a priest who served the God who is greater {than all other gods}. **19**So he blessed Abram by saying {to him},

"May the greatest God, who owns heaven and earth, bless you.

20Praise the greatest God,

because he enabled you to defeat your enemies!"

Then Abram gave {King} Melchizedek ten percent of everything {that he had recovered in the battle}. **21**After that, the king over {the city of} Sodom said to Abram, "{Please} return to me the people {whom you rescued}, but keep for yourself {their} belongings {that you recovered}." **22**But Abram replied to him, "I raise my hand {and swear} to Yahweh, {who is} the greatest God {and} the One who owns heaven and earth, **23**{that} I will not {accept} anything that is yours {or your people's}, not even a {piece of} string or the strap from a sandal. That way you can never say that you {were the one who} made me rich. **24**{So} I {will} only {keep} what my warriors ate and the part {of the plunder} that Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre deserve for being my allies. {Please} let them have their part {of the plunder}."

Chapter 15

God Makes a Covenant with Abram

1After that, Yahweh said to Abram in a vision,

"Abram, do not be afraid.

I will protect you,

{and} I will give you a very great reward." **2**But Abram said {to him}, "Yahweh my Master, even if you reward me greatly, {that will not benefit me}, since I still have no children. So {when I die,} the one who will inherit all that I have {is} {my servant} Eliezer {who is} {a foreigner} from {the city of} Damascus." **3**Then Abram continued, "That's right, you have not given me any children, so that now {when I die}, {one of} my household servants will inherit everything I own!" **4**But immediately Yahweh said to Abram, "{No,} your servant {Eliezer} will not inherit your property, rather it will be your very own {biological} son who will inherit it." **5**Then Yahweh took Abram outside {his tent} and said {to him}, "Look {up} at the {night} sky and count how many stars there are, if {in fact} you are able to count them {all}." {While Abram was looking at the stars,} Yahweh said to him, "That is how many descendants you will have."

6Abram trusted Yahweh, and because of that, Yahweh considered him to be righteous. **7**Then Yahweh said to him, "I am Yahweh who brought you {here} from {the city of} Ur that the Chaldeans rule, to give this land to you to own." **8**But Abram asked {him}, "Yahweh my Master, how can I be sure that this land will be mine?" **9**Yahweh replied, "Bring me a heifer, a female goat and a male sheep, each of which is three years old, as well as a dove and a young pigeon." **10**So {the next day} Abram brought all those {animals} to Yahweh {and killed them}. Then he cut the animals' bodies in half lengthwise and placed each half a short space across from the other half {in two rows},

except for the birds, which he did not cut in half. **11**Then {some} vultures flew down {and landed} on the {animal} bodies {to eat them}, but Abram chased them away.

12Later, as the sun was going down, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and suddenly, it became completely dark, and he became terrified. **13**Then Yahweh said to him, “I want you to know that your descendants will live as foreigners in a country that is not their own. They will serve the people {of that country} {as slaves}, and those people will treat them cruelly for 400 years. **14**But I will punish those people whom they serve. After that, your descendants will leave {that country} and take many riches with them. **15**As for you, after you have lived a good long life, you will die peacefully and join your ancestors {who have died before you}. **16**Then four generations later, your descendants will return here {to live}, because that is when the Amorites will have sinned as much as I will allow {before I take away their land and give it to your descendants}.

17When the sun had set, it became {very} dark. Then suddenly a {clay} pot {appeared} {that was full} of burning coals and had smoke coming from it, and also a blazing torch, and they {both} went between the {animal} halves. **18**At that time Yahweh made a {special} agreement with Abram and said, “I am giving your descendants this land, {which extends} from Egypt’s river {in the south} to the great Euphrates River {in the north}. **19**{That includes} {the land which belongs to} the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, **20**the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, **21**the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.”

Chapter 16

Abram and {Sarai’s Servant} Hagar Have {a Son Named} Ishmael

1Now Abram’s wife Sarai had {still} not given birth {to any children} for him, but she owned an Egyptian servant woman whose name was Hagar. **2**So she told Abram, “Please listen {to this}: {As you know,} Yahweh has not allowed me to have {any} children, {so} please have {marital} relations with my servant woman {Hagar} {so that} maybe I can have a family through her {children}.” Abram agreed to do what Sarai requested. **3**So Abram’s wife Sarai gave her Egyptian servant Hagar to her husband Abram to be his {second} wife. {This happened} after Abram {and Sarai} had lived in the region of Canaan for ten years.

4Then Abram had {marital} relations with Hagar, and she became pregnant. But when she realized that she was pregnant, she started to disrespect her mistress {Sarai}. **5**So Sarai complained to Abram, “It is your fault that I am suffering! I gave my servant to you {to sleep with}, but now that she realizes that she is pregnant, she disrespects me! I ask Yahweh to judge whether it is you or I who is responsible {for this}!” **6**Abram replied to her, “Listen, you are in charge of your servant. Do with her what{ever} you think is best.” Then Sarai treated Hagar so harshly that she ran away {from home to get away} from her.

7Then one of Yahweh’s angels came to Hagar by a spring of water in the desert. It was the spring by the road to {the city of} Shur. **8**And the angel asked {her}, “Hagar, who serves Sarai, where are you coming from, and where are you headed?” She answered {him}, “I am running away from my mistress, Sarai.” **9**But Yahweh’s angel told her, “Go back {home} to your mistress and {humbly} obey her {as her servant}.”

10Then the angel added, “I {Yahweh} will give you so many descendants that no one will be able to count them all, because there will be so many of them.”

11Then the angel {also} told her,

“Listen, {as you know,} you are pregnant.

You will have a son,

and you are to name him Ishmael, {which means “God listens,”}

because Yahweh listened to you when you were suffering {and has helped you}.

12{When Ishmael grows up,} he will be {proud and free} {like} a wild donkey.

He will fight against everyone,

and everyone will fight against him.

In fact, he will {even} be hostile

toward all his relatives."

13After Yahweh spoke to Hagar, she called him El Roi, {which means "the God who sees."} {She named him that,} because she had exclaimed {to herself}, "I just now saw the back of {God who} sees me!" **14**That is why the name of that well is Beer Lahai Roi, {which means "Well of the Living One, who sees me."} It is {still} there between {the cities of} Kadesh and Bered.

15Then Hagar {returned home and} gave birth to a son for Abram, and Abram named his son Ishmael. **16**Abram {was} 86 years old when Hagar had Ishmael for him.

Chapter 17

More Details about God's Agreement with Abram, including Circumcision

1{Years} later, when Abram was ninety-nine years old, Yahweh came to him and told him, "I {am} God {who is} all-powerful. Live in a way that pleases me so that you will be blameless. **2**I will establish my agreement with you, and I will increase {the number of} your descendants so that they are very numerous."

3{When} Abram {heard that, he} bowed with his face to the ground {before God} {to show respect}, and God continued speaking to him, **4**"Listen, this is what I will do to fulfill my agreement with you: I will make you the ancestor of many people groups. **5**So your name will no longer be Abram. Rather, {from now on} it will be Abraham, because you will be the ancestor of many people groups. **6**Yes, I will give you many, many descendants, so that you will become {the ancestor of many} people groups. In fact, some of your descendants will be kings. **7**I will establish my agreement with you and {all} your descendants {who live} after you for {all} generations to come. It will be an agreement that never ends, that I will be your God and {the God} of {all} your descendants. **8**I will also give to you and your descendants this land where you have been living as a foreigner, {yes,} the entire region of Canaan. They will own it forever, and I will be their God."

9Then God continued, "Now as for your part {in this agreement}, you must obey me. {That applies to} you as well as {all} your descendants for {all} generations to come. **10**This is {what I require in} my agreement with you and your descendants, which you {all} must obey: You must circumcise all males {who live} among you. **11**Yes, you must circumcise the foreskins of {all the males among} you, and that {custom} will remind {you all} that {I made} this agreement with you. **12**For all {future} generations you must circumcise {every} baby boy who is eight days old, {as well as} all {other} males among your people. {That includes} males from your own family as well as those who {are} not your descendants but {are servants whom you} bought from foreigners. **13**{Yes,} you must definitely circumcise {all of} them, {regardless of whether} they are sons from your own family or servants whom you have bought. That is how you must mark my agreement on your bodies to show that it is an agreement that never ends. **14**In fact, if any man refuses to let you circumcise him, you must {send him away and} not allow him to associate with my people, {because} he has disobeyed {what I require in} my agreement."

15God {also} told Abraham, "{As for} your wife Sarai, do not call her Sarai {anymore}. Rather, {from now on} her name will be Sarah. **16**I will bless her, and I will definitely enable her to bear a son for you. In fact, I will bless her so

that she will {have many descendants that will} become {many} people groups, and some of her descendants will {even} be kings {who rule} over people groups."

17{When} Abraham {heard that, he} bowed with his face to the ground {before God} {to respect him}, but he laughed {silently} and thought to himself, "How can a hundred-year-old man {like me} father a child? And how can Sarah, who is ninety years old, {still} have a baby?" **18**So Abraham said to God, "Please let Ishmael be the one whom you bless {as my heir}!" **19**God replied, "Yes, but {it is} your wife Sarah {who} will give birth to a son for you. You must name him Isaac. He {is the one} I will establish my agreement with, as a permanent agreement {that I will also keep} with {all} his descendants {who live} after him.

20"I also heard what you asked me to do for Ishmael. {So} this is what I will do: I will {also} bless him, and I will give him many children and greatly increase {the number of} his descendants. {In fact,} he will be the father of twelve {sons who become} {powerful} leaders, and I will make him {the ancestor of} a large people group. **21**But I will establish my agreement with {your son} Isaac. Sarah will give birth to him at this time next year." **22**After he had finished talking to Abraham, God left him and ascended {to heaven}.

23Then Abraham gathered his son Ishmael and all the {other} males who were born in his household and all {his male servants} whom he had bought, {yes,} every male in his household. Then on that same day he circumcised them, exactly as God had commanded him {to do}. **24**Abraham {was} 99 years old when he was circumcised, **25**and his son Ishmael was thirteen years old when {Abraham} circumcised him. **26**{So it was,} on that same day {both} Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised. **27**And all the {other} males in Abraham's household, {including} those {who had been} born in his household as well as those {whom he had} bought {as servants} from foreigners, were also circumcised.

Chapter 18

Yahweh Promises to Abraham and Sarah That They Will Have a Son

1Then {one day} Yahweh appeared {again} to Abraham at the oak trees on Mamre's land, while he was sitting {at} the entrance of his tent during the hottest part of the day. **2**Abraham looked up and saw that there were three men standing a short distance away. As soon as he saw {them}, he {jumped up and} hurried {to them} to greet them. Then he bowed {before them} {with his face} to the ground {to show respect}, **3**and he said {to them}, "Sirs, if you consider me worthy {to be your host}, please do not leave here without letting me serve you {as my guests}. **4**Please let me bring {you} some water, so that you {all} can wash {the dust off} your feet, and then rest under {the shade of} this tree. **5**Since you are here with me, let me {also} bring some food {for you} {to eat}. That way you can regain your strength before you continue on your way." They replied {to him}, "Okay, do what you have proposed."

6So Abraham quickly went to Sarah inside their tent and told her, "Quickly {get} three batches of our best flour and bake {some} bread." **7**Then he ran {outside} to his herd {of cattle} and chose one of his best calves that would be good to eat. Then he took it to one of his servants, and the servant quickly butchered it and cooked it. **8**Then Abraham brought {some} yogurt and milk and the meat that his servant had prepared, and he put it {all} before his {three} guests {to eat}. Then he stood nearby them {where they were sitting} under the tree {and served them} while they ate.

9Then {one of} the men asked Abraham, "Where {is} your wife Sarah?" Abraham answered, "{She is} there in the tent." **10**Then the man said {to Abraham}, "I will definitely come back {here} to visit you at this time next year. When I do, your wife Sarah will have a {baby} son." Now Sarah was listening inside the entrance of the tent, which was behind the man. **11**She and Abraham were {already} very old, so that Sarah was {far} past the age that she could have children. **12**So she laughed to herself {in disbelief} and said {to herself}, "It doesn't seem possible that I could experience the pleasure {of having a child} now that I am too old {to conceive}. Besides that, my husband is {also} {very} old!" **13**But Yahweh asked Abraham, "Sarah should not have laughed and said {to herself} that she is too old

to have a child! **14**Nothing is too difficult for Yahweh {to do}! At the time that I have set, I will return to you {here}. {Yes, I will come} at this time next year, and Sarah will {already} have a son." **15**{When Sarah heard that,} she was afraid, so she lied {to him} and said, "I did not laugh." But Yahweh replied, "That is not true. You did laugh."

Abraham Tries to Save the People of Sodom from Being Destroyed by Yahweh

16{When they had finished eating,} the {three} men got up {to leave} and started walking down toward {the city of} Sodom. Abraham escorted them {for a while} to see them on their way. **17**Then Yahweh thought {to himself}, "Should I keep secret from Abraham what I am about to do {to the city of Sodom}? **18**After all, he {and his descendants} will definitely become a great and powerful people group, and through them I will bless all the people groups in the world. **19**In fact, I have chosen him so that he will train his children and his descendants, so that they will live the way I want them to live and do what is right and treat people justly. Therefore I will do for him everything I have promised him {that I will do}."

20So Yahweh said {to Abraham}, "I have heard that {the people of} {the cities of} Sodom and Gomorrah have become very evil, and they are sinning very terribly. **21**I must go down {to those cities} now to determine whether {or not} they are guilty of everything that I have heard against them. If {they are} not {guilty}, {then} I will know {it} {and I will not punish them}."

22Then the {other two} men left and continued walking toward {the city of} Sodom, while Abraham remained {there} with Yahweh. **23**Then Abraham stepped closer {to Yahweh} and asked {him}, "Certainly you will not destroy righteous {people} {along} with wicked {people}, will you? **24**What {will you do} if there are fifty righteous {people} {living} in the city {of Sodom}? Will you really {still} destroy {all the people in} the city rather than let them all live because of the fifty upright {people} who live there? **25**Certainly you would never do such a thing as kill righteous {people} {together} with evil {people}, so that you are treating them both the same way! Certainly you would never do such a thing! As the Judge over everyone on the earth, certainly you will treat people justly." **26**Yahweh replied {to him}, "If there are fifty righteous {people} {living} in the city of Sodom, then I will spare the whole city {and everyone who lives there} because of them."

27Then Abraham spoke up {again} and asked {Yahweh}, "My Lord, please excuse me for speaking to you so boldly, even though I am {as insignificant as} dirt and ashes {compared to you}. **28**{But} what {will you do} if there are only forty-five righteous {people} {in the city} instead of fifty? Will you destroy the whole city {and everyone in it} if there are five people too few {who are righteous}?" Yahweh answered, "I will not destroy the city if there are forty-five {righteous people} {living} there."

29Then Abraham spoke again to Yahweh and asked, "What {will you do} if there are {only} forty {righteous people} in the city? {Will you destroy it then?}" Yahweh answered, "I will not destroy {the city}, in order to save the forty {righteous people}."

30Then Abraham pleaded {with him}, "My Lord, please do not be angry {with me}, but let me ask {you} {another question}: What {will you do} if there are {only} thirty {righteous people} {living} there?" He replied, "I will not destroy {the city} if there are thirty {righteous people} there."

31Then Abraham asked {him}, "My Lord, please excuse me for speaking to you so boldly. What {will you do} if there are {only} twenty {righteous people} {living} in the city?" Yahweh replied, "I will not destroy the city, in order to save the twenty {righteous people}."

32Then Abraham said, "My Lord, please do not be angry {with me}, but let me ask {you} just one more thing: What {will you do} if there are {only} ten {righteous people} in the city?" Yahweh answered {him}, "I will not destroy {the city}, in order to save the ten {righteous people}." **33**When Yahweh had finished talking with Abraham, he left {him}, and Abraham returned home.

Chapter 19

Yahweh Destroys Sodom and Gomorrah

1That evening the two angels arrived at {the city of} Sodom, while Lot was sitting at the gate of the city. When Lot saw them, he stood up and greeted them and {then} bowed {before them} with {his} face to the ground {to show respect}. **2**Then he said {to them}, “Sirs, please listen {to this}: Please come to my house so that I can serve you and you can lodge for the night {there}. {That way} too {you can} wash {the dust off} your feet. Then {tomorrow morning} you can get up early and continue traveling.” But the two angels replied, “Thank you, but we will {just} stay in the public square tonight.” **3**However Lot continued to urgently invite them until they {finally agreed and} went with him to his house. Then Lot prepared a big meal for them, including {some} flat bread, and they {sat down and} ate {the meal}.

4{But} {after supper,} before they could lie down {to sleep}, {all} the men in the city of Sodom surrounded Lot’s house, including men of all ages. {In fact,} all the people from every part {of the city were there}. **5**Then they shouted to Lot, “Where {are} the {two} men who came to lodge with you tonight? Bring them outside to us so that we can have relations with them!” **6**But Lot went outside near the doorway {to talk} to them, and he closed the door {of the house} behind him. **7**Then he pleaded {with them}, “I beg you, my friends, do not do such an evil thing! **8**Listen {to this} please: My two daughters have never had {marital} relations with a man. Allow me to bring them out to you {instead} so that you can do with them whatever you want. But do not harm these men, because they are my guests and I am responsible for their safety.” **9**But the men of Sodom shouted {at him}, “Get out of our way!” Then they complained {to each other}, “This guy came {here} as a foreigner, and now he thinks that he can judge {us}!” {Then they shouted at Lot,} “We will do worse things to you than {we do} to your {two} guests!” Then they started shoving hard against Lot and surged forward to break through the door {of his house}. **10**But Lot’s {two} guests {opened the door}, reached outside and {quickly} pulled him {back} into the house with them and closed the door. **11**Then those two men {who were angels} caused the men who {were at} the door of the house to be blind, including every last one of them, so that they exhausted themselves {groping around} trying to find the door.

12Then the {two} angels asked Lot, “Do you have any other relatives here in Sodom? {If you have} sons-in-law or sons or daughters or any {other} members of your family here, {then} {quickly} get them away from this city, **13**because we are about to destroy it. Yahweh has heard that the people of this city are guilty of serious sins, so he has sent us to destroy the city.” **14**So Lot went to his {future} sons-in-law who were engaged to his daughters, and he warned them, “Hurry up {and} leave this city, because Yahweh is about to destroy it!” But his sons-in-law thought that he was joking, {so they ignored him}.

15Early the next morning, the {two} angels urged Lot, “Hurry up {and} take your wife and your two daughters {out of the city} so that you will not die when {God} punishes {the people of} the city.” **16**Lot hesitated, but Yahweh was being merciful to him, so the {two} men took hold of Lot’s hand and the hands of his wife and two daughters and led them out of the city. **17**As {soon as} the angels had taken them outside {the city}, one of them said {to Lot}, “Run away from here as fast as you can! Do not look behind you, and do not delay in the valley for any reason! Go quickly to the hill country, or else you will die!” **18**But Lot replied to them, “I beg you, sirs, do not {make us do that}. **19**Listen {to me} please: You have treated me well even though I am unimportant, and you have been very kind to me and saved my life. But I am not able to run {all the way} to the mountains before the disaster occurs and kills me. **20**{So} listen {to this} please: That town up ahead {is} near {enough} to run to {in time}, and it {is} {just} a small {town}. Please let us run there, {and do not destroy it}. {After all,} it is very small. Then we can stay alive.” **21**The angel replied to Lot, “Alright, I will allow you to go to the {small} town that you’re talking about, and I will not destroy it. **22**{But} hurry up {now and} run there, because I cannot destroy anything until you get there.” Since Lot said the town was small, the name of the town is Zoar {which means “small”}.

23The sun was rising over the land as Lot {and his family} reached {the town of} Zoar. **24**Then Yahweh caused fire and burning rocks to fall like {heavy} rain from the sky on {the cities of} Sodom and Gomorrah. **25**In that way, he

{completely} destroyed those {two} cities and the rest of the valley, including everyone who lived in the cities and {all} the plants in the area. **26**But Lot's wife, {who was} {walking} behind him, glanced back {at the city}, and {immediately} she turned into a statue of {solid} salt {rock}.

27Early that same morning, Abraham got up and returned to the place where he had stood with Yahweh {the previous day}. **28**He looked down at {the cities of} Sodom and Gomorrah and all {the rest of} the valley. There in front of him, he saw that {lots of thick} smoke was billowing up over the land like smoke from a {huge} fire. **29**When God destroyed the cities in the valley, he did not forget Abraham {or his request}. So he saved Lot from the catastrophe that he had sent to {completely} destroy the cities where Lot had been living.

Lot's Descendants from His Daughters

30After that, Lot was afraid to stay in {the town of} Zoar, so he and his two daughters moved from there to the mountains, where they lived in a cave. **31**Then {one day} {his} older {daughter} said to {his} younger {daughter}, "Our father is elderly, and there are not any men around here to marry us, which {is} the custom {that people have} everywhere else in the world. **32**{So} come on, we should get our father drunk on wine. Then we can have {sexual} relations with him so that we can continue our family line with him." **33**So that night Lot's daughters got their father drunk on wine. Then the older {daughter} went {to him} and had relations with him. But {he was so drunk that} he was not {even} aware that she got in bed {with him} or that she left.

34The next day {Lot's} older {daughter} said to {his} younger {daughter}, "Listen, last night I had {sexual} relations with our father. Tonight we should get him drunk on wine again. Then you {also} should go {and} have relations with him so that we can continue our family line with him." **35**So that night Lot's daughters got their father drunk on wine again. Then the younger {daughter} went {to him} and had relations with him. And {once again} {he was so drunk that} he was not aware that she got in bed {with him} or that she left.

36In that way, both of Lot's daughters became pregnant from {having relations with} their father. **37**Later his older {daughter} gave birth to a son, and she named him Moab, {which means "from my father."} He {became} the ancestor of the Moabite people {who are still living} today. **38**Lot's younger {daughter} also gave birth to a son, and she named him Ben-Ammi, {which means "son of my people."} He {became} the ancestor of the Ammonite people {who are still living} today.

Chapter 20

King Abimelech Takes Sarah to Be His Wife

1Meanwhile Abraham {and his family} left from the place where they were living {and moved south} to the Negev {Desert} area. There they lived between {the cities of} Kadesh and Shur, and they stayed for a while in {the city of} Gerar. **2**{While they were there,} Abraham told {people} that his wife Sarah {was} his sister. So {one day} Abimelech, {who was} the king of Gerar, had {some of his servants} bring Sarah {to his home} {to be his wife}. **3**But that night God appeared to {King} Abimelech in a dream and warned him, "Listen, you are about to die because the woman whom you have taken {to be your wife} is {already} married to someone else!" **4**However, Abimelech had not {yet} slept with Sarah, so he asked {God}, "Lord, will you kill {me and} my people even if {we are} innocent? **5**Abraham himself told me that Sarah was his sister. And she herself also said that he was her brother. {So} I took her {to be my wife} with a pure conscience, and I did not know that I was doing anything wrong!" **6**God replied to him in the dream, "Yes, I realize that {it was} with a pure conscience that you took Sarah {to be your wife}. In fact, I {am the one who} kept you from sinning against me. That is why I did not let you sleep with her. **7**Now then, you must give Abraham's wife back {to him}. He is a spokesman {for me}, so he will ask me to be merciful to you, so that you will not die. However, if you refuse to give Sarah back {to him}, you can be sure that you and all your people will definitely die!"

8Early the next morning {King} Abimelech got up and called together all of his officials. He told them everything
that had happened, and they were very afraid {that God would punish them}. **9**Then the king summoned Abraham
and scolded him {by saying}, “You have treated us very badly! I never did anything wrong to you, and yet you have
caused me and the people whom I rule to be guilty of sinning terribly! You have wronged me in ways that should
never be done {to anyone}!” **10**Finally, {King} Abimelech asked him, “What motivated you to do what you did?”
11Abraham answered {him}, “{I did it,} because I thought that there was certainly no one in this city who revered
God, so {I was afraid} they would kill me to get my wife {for themselves}. **12**Besides that, Sarah actually {is} my half-
sister. We have the same father, but different mothers, and {after we grew up,} we got married. **13**{Years} later
when God told me to leave my father’s family, I asked her to do me a favor and tell people wherever we go that I
{am} her brother.”

14Then {King} Abimelech brought {many} sheep and cattle and male and female servants {to Abraham} and gave
{them all} to him. He {also} gave Abraham’s wife Sarah back to him. **15**Then {King} Abimelech said {to him}, “Look,
my land {is} available to you. Live {wherever} you decide {is} best.” **16**Then he {turned} to Sarah {and} said, “Listen, I
have given 12 {kilos of} silver to your brother. I’m doing this so that everyone knows you did nothing wrong, and to
compensate you for everything {that has happened to you}.” **17**Then Abraham asked God {to be merciful to the
king}. So God healed {King} Abimelech, as well as his wife and his female servants, and they were able to have
children {again}. **18**{Previously} Yahweh had kept all the women in Abimelech’s household from conceiving because
he had taken Abraham’s wife Sarah.

Chapter 21

Isaac’s Birth and Circumcision

1Then Yahweh blessed Sarah {just} as he had said {he would}. Yes, he did for her {exactly} what he had promised
{to do}. **2**So Sarah became pregnant and at the time {God had} appointed, she gave birth to a son for Abraham
when he was old, just as God had promised him {that she would}. **3**Then Abraham named his son Isaac, {the son}
whom Sarah had given birth to. **4**Also, when Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, which was exactly
what God had commanded him {to do}.

5Abraham {was} 100 years old when his son Isaac was born. **6**{When he was born,} Sarah exclaimed, “God has
made me laugh {for joy}! Everyone who hears {about this} will laugh {for joy} with me!” **7**She also exclaimed, “No
one would have {even thought of} telling Abraham {that} I would have children. Yet I have given birth to a son {for
him} when he is old!”

Sarah Has Abraham Send Hagar and Ishmael Away

8Isaac grew as a child and reached the age when his mother stopped nursing him. When that happened, Abraham
held a big feast {to celebrate}. **9**But {during the feast} Sarah noticed that {Ishmael,} the son of {her} Egyptian
{handmaid} Hagar and Abraham, was making fun of {Isaac}. **10**So she {was angry and} told Abraham, “Get rid of
that servant woman and her son! Her son must never share {any part of} what my son Isaac inherits {from you}!”
11Abraham was very upset about that, because {Ishmael} was {also} his son {and he cared about him too}. **12**But
God told him, “Do not be upset about the boy or your servant woman. {Rather,} listen to everything Sarah tells you
{to do}, {and do it,} because Isaac is the one who will be the ancestor of your descendants {whom I promised to
you}. **13**But I will also make your servant woman’s son become {the ancestor of} a {large} people group, because he
is your son.”

14Early the next morning Abraham got up, brought {some} food and a leather container {full} of water to Hagar
{and} put them on her back. Then he sent her off with the boy, and they left and wandered {around} in the desert
near {the city of} Beersheba. **15**When they had finished {all} the water in the container, she left her son under {the

shade of} a bush. **16**She thought {to herself}, “I cannot {bear to} watch my son die.” So she went {away from him} and sat down by herself, about as far away as someone can shoot an arrow. Then she started crying loudly.

17God {also} heard the boy crying, so one of his angels called to Hagar from heaven and said, “What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid. God has heard the boy crying over there {and will take care of him}. **18**{So} go help the boy to get up, and take care of him, because I {Yahweh} will make him become {the ancestor of} a large people group.” **19**Then God enabled Hagar to see a water well. So she went over {to the well}, filled her {water} container {with} water, and gave her son some water to drink.

20As the boy grew up, God was with him {and helped him}. He lived in the {Paran} Desert and learned to hunt skillfully with a bow {and arrows}. **21**While he was there, his mother found a wife for him {who was} from the country of Egypt.

King Abimelech Makes a Treaty with Abraham

22Meanwhile, one day {King} Abimelech {came} with his army captain Phicol to Abraham {and} said to him, “{I have noticed that} God {is} with you {and helps you} in everything that you do. **23**Now then, {please} vow to me here in God’s presence that you will never {again} deceive me or my children or my descendants. {Instead,} just as I have treated you kindly, {vow that} you will {also} be kind to me and {my people in} this country where you are living.” **24**Abraham replied {to him}, “I vow {that I will do those things}.”

25Then Abraham {also} confronted {King} Abimelech about a water well that Abimelech’s servants had taken control of {from Abraham’s servants}. **26**But Abimelech responded, “I have no idea who did that. Besides that, you did not tell me {about it} {before}, and so today is the first that I have heard about it.”

27Then Abraham gave {some of his} sheep and cattle to Abimelech, and he and Abimelech made a {peace} treaty {with one another}. **28**Abraham {also} separated seven female lambs from the rest of the flock. **29**So Abimelech asked him, “Why did you separate those seven lambs {from the rest of the flock}?” **30**Abraham replied, “Because I want you to accept them from me, to show {everyone} that you agree with me that I dug this well {and it belongs to me}.” **31**{Abimelech accepted the lambs,} so Abraham named that place Beersheba, {which means “Well of the Seven” or “Well of the Vow,”} because that’s where they both vowed {to live at peace with one another}.

32After Abraham and {King} Abimelech made their {peace} treaty at Beersheba, Abimelech and his army captain Phicol left {from there} and went back to {their homes in} the Philistines’ territory {that Abimelech ruled over}. **33**Then Abraham planted an {evergreen} tree {named} tamarisk at {the place called} Beersheba, and there he worshiped Yahweh, {who is} the God who lives forever. **34**After that, Abraham lived {there} in the Philistines’ territory for many years.

Chapter 22

God Tests Abraham’s Trust in Him

1Sometime later God {decided to} test Abraham. So he called to him, “Abraham!” Abraham replied, “Yes, {Lord}?” **2**Then God commanded {him}, “Take your son {with you}, {yes,} your only son Isaac whom you love, and travel {with him} to the region of Moriah. There you are to burn him up {on an altar} as a sacrifice {to me}, on one of the mountains that I will show to you.”

3So the next morning Abraham got up early and put a {pack} saddle on his donkey {to get it ready} {for the trip}. Then he got his son Isaac and two of his servants, and they chopped {some} {fire}wood that they would use to burn the sacrifice {and loaded it on the donkey}. Then they started traveling to the place that God had told Abraham {to go to}. **4**Three days later Abraham looked {ahead} and in the distance he could see the mountain

{where they were headed}. **5**Then he told his servants, “You {two} stay here with the donkey, while my son and I go {to the mountain} over there and worship {God}. Then we will come back to you.”

6Then Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering {off the donkey} and loaded {it} on his son Isaac{’s shoulder} {to carry}. He {himself} carried a fire {pot} {with hot coals in it} and a knife {to kill the sacrifice}. Then the two of them walked on together. **7**{As they walked,} Isaac said to Abraham, “Father?” Abraham replied, “Yes, my son?” Then Isaac asked {him}, “I see {that we have} the fire {coals} and the {fire}wood, but where {is} the lamb that {we} will burn as a sacrifice {to God}?” **8**Abraham answered {him}, “My son, God himself will provide a lamb for us to burn as a sacrifice {to him}.” Then they continued walking together {toward the mountain}.

9When they reached the place that God had told him {to go to}, Abraham built a {stone} altar there and put the wood {on top of it}. Then he tied his son Isaac{’s arms and legs} {with rope} and laid him on top of the wood on the altar. **10**Then he picked up the knife {in order} to kill his son. **11**But one of Yahweh’s angels called to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!” And he replied, “Yes, {Lord}?” **12**Then the angel told {him}, “Do not harm your son or do anything {else} to him. Now I know that you revere me, since you {obeyed me and} did not refuse to sacrifice your son to me, {even though he is} your only son.”

13Then Abraham looked around and there behind {him} he saw a ram that had its horns stuck in a bush. So he {released Isaac,} went {over to the ram} and untangled it. {Then he killed it} and burned it {on the altar} as a sacrifice {to God} in place of his son. **14**That is why Abraham named that place Yahweh-Yireh, {which means “Yahweh will provide”}. {Even} today people {still} say, “On Yahweh’s mountain he will provide what you need.”

15Then Yahweh’s angel called to Abraham from heaven again. **16**He said, “This is what Yahweh declares {to you}: ‘With myself {as my own witness}, I vow {to you} that since you have obeyed me and did not hold back your son {from me}, {yes,} your only son, **17**I will abundantly bless you. In fact, I will give you so many descendants {that they will be} {as numerous} as the stars in the sky and {as numerous} as the {grains of} sand on the seashore. They will defeat their enemies and rule over them. **18**Through your descendants {I} will bless all the people groups on the earth. {I will do that} because you obeyed me.’”

19After that, Abraham returned {with Isaac} to his {two} servants. Then together they {all} traveled {back} {home} to {the city of} Beersheba, and Abraham {and his family} stayed there.

Abraham’s Brother Nahor’s Twelve Sons

20Sometime later someone told Abraham, “I have news {for you}: Your brother Nahor and {his wife} Milcah also have {some} sons, **21**The oldest son {is} Uz, {the second is} Buz, and {the third is} Kemuel, {who is} the father of Aram. **22**{They also have sons named} Kesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel.” **23**Bethuel had {a daughter named} Rebekah. Those {are} the eight {sons} {that} Milcah had for Abraham’s brother Nahor. **24**Besides that, Nahor and his servant-wife Reumah also had {some sons, including} Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.

Chapter 23

Sarah Dies and Abraham Buys Some Land to Bury Her Body

1Sarah lived to be 127 years old. That is how old she was **2**when she died in {the city of} Kiriath Arba, which is {now called} Hebron, in the region of Canaan. Abraham went {to her} and cried and mourned for her. **3**Later he stood up from {mourning} beside her and {went} to {the leaders of} the Hittites {at the city gates} and said to them, **4**“{As you know,} I {am} a foreigner who is living among you {so I do not own any property here}. {Please} sell me some of your land so I have a place to bury {the body of} my wife who has died.” **5**{The leaders of} the Hittites responded to Abraham, **6**“Sir, {please} listen to what we propose: You are a powerful man {living} among us. {So} {you may}

bury {the body of} your wife who has died in {any} one of our best burial sites. All of us are willing for you to use {any of} our burial sites to bury her."

7Abraham stood up and bowed {in respect} in front of {the leaders of} the Hittites, who owned the land {in the area}. **8**Then he said to them, "If you are willing {for me} to bury my deceased {wife} {here}, {please} help me by asking Ephron the son of Zohar **9**to sell me his cave that is at the edge of his field in the Machpelah {area}. Ask him to sell it to me for its full price, with {all of} you {here} to witness {the sale}. That way I will have a place where I can bury {my wife who has died}." **10**Now Ephron the Hittite was sitting {there at the meeting} among the {other} Hittite leaders, so he replied to Abraham as the {other} leaders listened, including everyone who had gathered {there} at the city gate. He said, **11**"That's not necessary, sir. {Please} accept this offer: I {hereby} give you the {entire} field, including the cave that {is} in it. I am giving it to you {now} as the leaders of my people watch. {You may} bury your deceased {wife} {there}."

12Then Abraham bowed {again} before the leaders who owned the land {in the area}. **13**As they listened, he said to Ephron, "Rather {than that}, since you are willing {to let me have the field}, please accept my offer. I want to pay {you} the {full} price for the field. {Please} let me buy it from you, so that {it will be mine and} I can bury {my wife} there who has died." **14**Ephron responded to Abraham, **15**"Sir, {please} listen to me. The land {is worth} about five kilos of silver. {However} since you and I are friends, there is no need for that. {Go ahead and} bury your deceased {wife} {there}." **16**Abraham agreed with Ephron's price, and he paid Ephron the {amount of} silver that he had suggested while {the rest of} the Hittites listened. {Abraham weighed the} 400 shekels of silver using the standard weights that sellers used {at that time}.

17So Ephron sold his field {to Abraham}, including the cave that {was} in the field, as well as all the trees that {were} inside its boundaries. The field was in the Machpelah {area} near {the city of} Mamre. {Ephron sold that field} **18**to Abraham, and it became his property while the Hittites watched, including everyone who had gathered at the city gate. **19**After that, Abraham put {the body of} his wife Sarah in the cave in that field in the Machpelah {area} east of {the city of} Mamre, that is, Hebron, in the region of Canaan. **20**So {that is how} that field, including the cave that {was} in the field, was {officially} sold to Abraham by the Hittites, so that he had a place where he could bury {his wife who had died}.

Chapter 24

Abraham Finds a Wife for Isaac

1Abraham had lived a long time and was {now} {very} old, and Yahweh had blessed him in every way. **2**{One day} Abraham said to his chief household servant, who managed his entire estate for him, "Please put your hand under my thigh {to show that you will do what I ask}. **3**I want you to vow {to me}, with Yahweh the God who rules the heavens and the earth as your witness, that you will not arrange for my son {Isaac} to marry {any of} the Canaanite women who live around us here. **4**Rather, you must go to the country where I grew up, to my relatives {who live there}, and find a wife for him {from there}."

5But {Abraham's} servant asked him, "What {should I do} if the {young} woman {I find} refuses to come {back} with me to this land {to live}? Do you want me to take your son back {there} to your home country {to marry her} {and live there}?" **6**Abraham answered him, "{No,} be sure that you never take my son back there {to live}, **7**{because} Yahweh, the God who rules the heavens, brought me {here} from my father's household and from the land where {the rest of} my relatives live, and he vowed to me that he will give this land to my descendants. He will send one of his angels ahead of you {to help you}, so that you will find a woman from my home land for my son {to marry}. **8**But if the woman {you find} refuses to come back {here} with you, then you will be free from {keeping} this vow that you are making to me {now}. But {no matter what happens,} never take my son back to my home country!"

9So {Abraham's} servant put his hand under his master's thigh and vowed to him that he would do what Abraham had requested him to do. **10**Then he got ten of his master's camels ready {for the trip}, and after he loaded them

with all kinds of valuable things from his master {to use as gifts}, he left {with some other servants} and made the {long} trip to {the region of} Aram Naharaim, to the city where Nahor lived. **11**{When they arrived there,} Abraham's servant had the camels kneel down {to rest} outside the city near the well {that was there}. It was evening time, when the {young} women {of the city} were starting to come out {to the well} to draw water.

12Then Abraham's servant prayed, "{Dear} Yahweh, {who is} the God {who takes care} of my master Abraham, please help me succeed today and {in that way} be kind to my master. **13**As you see, I am standing by this well, and young women from the city are coming {here} to draw water. **14**{Please} make it happen {that} when I say to one of the young women, 'Please lower your jug so that I can have a drink,' she will say {to me}, 'Have a drink and I will also draw water for your camels.' {Then I will know that} she {is the one} you have chosen to be the wife of Isaac who serves you, and that you have been kind to my master."

15Before Abraham's servant had {even} finished praying, he saw {a young woman named} Rebekah coming out {of the city} carrying a water jug on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel, {who was} the son of Milcah and Abraham's brother Nahor. **16**She was a very beautiful unmarried young woman, who had never had {marital} relations with a man. She walked down to the well, filled her jug {with water} and came {back} up {carrying it on her shoulder}.

17Then {Abraham's} servant ran to meet her and said {to her}, "Please let me have a little water to drink from your jug." **18**She replied, "{Please} have a drink, sir." Then she quickly lowered her jug {from her shoulder} to her hands and let him drink {some water} {from it}. **19**After that, she said {to him}, "I will also draw water for your camels until they have had enough to drink." **20**Then she quickly emptied {the rest of the water from} her jug into the {animal drinking} trough {that was there} and ran back {and forth} to the well to draw {more water}, until she had drawn {enough} for all of the camels. **21**Meanwhile {Abraham's} servant silently watched Rebekah {and waited} to find out whether or not Yahweh had made him successful on his journey {to find a wife for Isaac}.

22Finally, when the camels had finished drinking, the servant {gave Rebekah} a gold nose ring that weighed 6 grams, and two gold bracelets for her wrists that weighed 110 grams {each}. **23**Then he asked {her}, "Please tell me who your father {is}. {Also,} is there room at his house for me and my men to spend the night {there}?" **24**Rebekah answered him, "My father {is} Bethuel, {and he is} one of Nahor and Milcah's sons." **25**Then she added, "We have plenty of both straw and {other} feed {at our house} {for the camels to eat}, {and there is} also {enough} room {for you all} to stay {there} tonight." **26**Then the servant bowed to the ground and worshiped Yahweh, **27**by saying, "Praise Yahweh, the God {who takes care} of my master Abraham! He has never stopped being kind and faithful to my master, and he has guided me on {my} journey {here} {to} the home of my master's relatives!"

28Then Rebekah hurried {home} and told her mother's family about what had happened. **29**Rebekah had a brother whose name {was} Laban, and he rushed out to the well where Abraham's servant was. **30**As soon as Laban had seen the nose ring {that his sister was wearing} and the bracelets on her arms and had heard her announce what the servant had said to her, he went {out} to meet him. He found him standing with {his} camels at the well. **31**Then Laban said {to him}, "Come {with me}, you whom Yahweh has blessed. There is no need for you to stand out here. I have gotten our house ready {for you and your men to stay with us} and {there is also} a place for {your} camels {to stay}."

32So Abraham's servant went home {with Laban}. {When they arrived there,} Laban unloaded the camels, and he gave straw and {other} feed to them {to eat}. {He} also {gave} water {to the servant} and the men who {were} with him to wash their feet. **33**Then {Laban's family} served them a meal to eat, but the servant said {to them}, "Before I can eat, I need to tell {you} why I am here." Laban responded {to him}, "{Please} tell {us} {what you have to say}."

34So the servant told {them}, "I am Abraham's servant. **35**Yahweh has abundantly blessed my master, so that he has become wealthy. Yahweh has given him {many} sheep and cattle, {much} silver and gold, {many} male and female servants, and {many} camels and donkeys. **36**Besides that, my master's wife Sarah gave birth to a son for him when she was old, and my master has given him everything that he owns. **37**{Before I came here,} my master made me vow {to do something for him}. He said, 'You must not arrange for my son {Isaac} to marry {any of} the Canaanite

women whose land we have been living in. **38**Rather, go to my father's family, to my {own} relatives, and find a wife for my son {from among them}.' **39**So I asked my master, 'What {should I do} if the {young} woman {I find} refuses to come {back} {here} with me?' **40**He answered me, 'Yahweh whom I serve will send one of his angels with you. He will make you succeed on your journey, so that you will find a wife for my son from {among} my relatives, {someone} from my father's family. **41**At that time you will be free from {keeping} the vow {you are making} to me: If you find a wife for Isaac but my family refuses to let her go with you, then you will be free from {keeping} your vow to me.'

42"Then today when I came to {your city's} well, I prayed, '{Dear} Yahweh, {who is} the God {who takes care} of my master Abraham, if you are willing, please give me success on this journey that I have made. **43**As you see, I am standing {here} near {this} well. {Please} make it happen {that} when a young woman comes out {of the city} to draw water and I ask her, "Please let me drink a little water from your jug," **44**if she replies, "{Yes,} have a drink and I will also draw water for your camels," {then} {let} her {be} the woman whom {you} Yahweh have chosen to be the wife of my master's son.'

45"Before I had {even} finished praying quietly, suddenly I saw Rebekah coming out {of the city} carrying her {empty} {water} jug on her shoulder. She walked down to the well and filled her jug with water, so I asked her, 'May I please have a drink {of water}?' **46**She quickly lowered her jug from her {shoulder} and said, 'Have a drink, and I will also draw water for your camels.' So I took a drink {from her jug}, and she also gave water to my camels. **47**Then I asked her, 'Who {is} your father?' She answered, 'My father is Bethuel, {who is} one of Nahor and Milcah's sons.' After that I gave her a nose ring and bracelets to wear. **48**Then I bowed {to the ground} and worshiped and praised Yahweh, the God {who takes care} of my master Abraham, because he guided me right where I should go to find the granddaughter of my master's brother {to be the wife} for my master's son. **49**So now, {please} tell me whether or not you are willing to be kind and faithful to my master {by letting her come with me}, so that I can decide what to do {next}."

50Then Laban and Bethuel answered {Abraham's servant}, "{It is clear that} Yahweh has made {all} this happen, {so} it is not our place to tell you anything different. **51**Look, here {is} Rebekah. Take {her with you} and return {home} so that she can marry your master's son as Yahweh has guided." **52**When Abraham's servant heard what they said, he bowed to the ground {and thanked} Yahweh. **53**Then he took out {expensive gifts, including} silver and gold jewelry, and {also} {beautiful} clothing, and gave {them} to Rebekah. He {also} gave {valuable} gifts to her brother and mother.

54Then Abraham's servant and his men ate {supper} and slept {there} that night. {Early} the next morning after everyone got up, Abraham's servant said {to Rebekah's family}, "{Please} let me return {home} {now} to my master." **55**But Rebekah's brother and her mother replied, "{Please} let the young woman stay {here} with us {for another} ten days or so. Then you can go and take her {with you}." **56**But the servant said to them, "{Please} do not delay me. Now that Yahweh has made my journey successful, let me go so that I can return to my master." **57**So they replied, "Let's call Rebekah and ask her what she wants to do."

58So they called for her and asked her, "Do you want to go {now} with this man?" She answered {them}, "{Yes,} I will go {now}." **59**So they {agreed to} send their sister Rebekah and her {personal} servant {who had helped raise her}, with Abraham's servant and his companions. **60**They blessed Rebekah by saying to her,

"Sister, we pray that God will give you

countless thousands {of descendants},

and that he will help them conquer

{all} their enemies and rule over them!" **61**After Rebekah and her servants {who were going with her} packed their things, they got up on the camels {they were going to ride} and went with Abraham's servant. So {Abraham's} servant took Rebekah {with him} and started the journey {back} {home}.

62Meanwhile Isaac returned {home} from visiting {the place called} Beer Lahai Roi. {At that time} he was living in the Negev {Wilderness}. **63**{One day} as it was becoming evening, he went to the field to pray. {As he was praying,} he looked up and suddenly he saw {in the distance} {some} camels coming {toward him}. **64**Rebekah {also} looked up and saw Isaac. Immediately she got down from the camel {that she was riding}, **65**and asked {Abraham's} servant, "Who is that man in the field who is walking {this way} to greet us?" The servant answered {her}, "He {is} my master {Isaac}." So she covered her face with a veil {to show modesty}.

66Then the servant told Isaac everything that he had done {on the journey}. **67**Then Isaac took Rebekah into the tent where his mother Sarah had lived, and he married her, so that she became his wife. Isaac loved her, and he was happy again after {mourning for} his mother {who had died}.

Chapter 25

Abraham and Keturah's Descendants

1Then Abraham got married again, and his wife's name {was} Keturah. **2**She had sons with him {whom they named} Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. **3**{Her son} Jokshan had {sons named} Sheba and Dedan. Dedan's descendants became {people groups named} the Asshurites, Letushites, and Leummites. **4**{Keturah's son} Midian had sons {named} Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida, and Eldaah. All of those {were} Keturah's descendants {whom she had with Abraham}.

5Abraham gave everything that he owned to Isaac. **6**He also gave {valuable} gifts to the sons that his servant wives had {with him}, but after that he made them move away to the east country {so that they would live} far away from his son Isaac.

Abraham Dies and Is Buried

7Abraham lived to be 175 years old. **8**Then he took his last breath and died at a very old age. After he had lived a long and satisfying life, he joined his ancestors {who had already died}. **9**His sons Isaac and Ishmael put his body in the cave of Machpelah {which was} in the field that had belonged to Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, east of {the city of} Mamre. **10**{That is} the {same} field that Abraham had bought from the Hittites. That is {the cave} where his sons buried his body next to {the body of} his wife Sarah {whom he had buried there before}. **11**After Abraham died, God blessed his son Isaac, who lived near {the well} Beer Lahai Roi.

Ishmael's Descendants

12What follows {is} a record of the descendants of Abraham's son Ishmael, the son Abraham had with Sarah's Egyptian slave woman Hagar. **13**Here is {a list of} the names of Ishmael's sons, {given} in the order that they were born: His oldest {son} {was} Nebaioth, followed by Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, **14**Mishma, Dumah, Massa, **15**Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedermah. **16**Those were Ishmael's {twelve} sons, who became the leaders of twelve tribes that were named after them, and each tribe lived in its {own} towns and villages. **17**Ishmael lived a total of 137 years. Then he took his last breath and died, and he joined his ancestors {who had died before him}. **18**His descendants lived {throughout the area that extended} from {the region of} Havilah to {the wilderness of} Shur that {is} east of {the country of} Egypt as you head {from there} to {the city of} Asshur. They lived as enemies against all their relatives.

The Birth of Isaac's Twin Sons Jacob and Esau

19Here {is} {more of} the history about Abraham's son Isaac and his descendants: {After} Abraham had Isaac, **20**Isaac {grew up and} married Rebekah when he was forty years old. {She was} a daughter of Bethuel, {who was}

an Aramean from {the region of} Paddan Aram, and her brother was Laban {who was also} an Aramean. **21**However {for many years} Rebekah was not able to become pregnant, so Isaac prayed that Yahweh would give her children. Yahweh did what Isaac prayed for, so that she became pregnant {with twins}. **22**But the {two} babies wrestled with each other inside her, so she asked, “Why is this happening to me?” Then she asked Yahweh about it. **23**Yahweh answered her,

“{The ancestors of} two {future} people groups {are} inside you.

They will be enemies {starting now} even before they are born.

One of them will be more powerful than the other,

so that the older {son’s descendants} will serve the younger {son’s descendants}.”

24Later when it was time {for Rebekah} to give birth, sure enough, {there were} twin boys inside her! **25**The first {one} who was born was completely covered with thick red hair. So his parents named him Esau, {which means “hairy.”} **26**Next his brother was born, with his hand grabbing on {tightly} to Esau’s heel. So they named him Jacob, {which means “heel-grabber.”} Isaac {was} sixty years old when Esau and Jacob were born.

Esau Sells His Rights as the Firstborn Son to Jacob

27When the boys grew up, Esau became a skilled hunter and he enjoyed {being} in the open country, but Jacob had a quiet personality and {preferred} to work at home. **28**Isaac’s favorite son was Esau, because he liked to eat the meat of wild animals {that Esau hunted}, whereas Rebekah’s favorite son was Jacob.

29{One day} when Jacob was making {some} soup, Esau came home from {hunting out in} the open country and he {felt} weak {and hungry}. **30**So Esau requested from Jacob, “Please let me have some of that very red soup because I {feel} weak {and hungry}!” That is why Esau’s nickname was Edom, {which means “red.”} **31**But Jacob replied, “First trade your rights as the oldest son to me {for the soup,} {then I will give you some}.” **32**Esau responded, “Look, I am about to die {from hunger}! So my birthright is of no use to me {right now}.” **33**Jacob insisted, “{First} make a vow to me today {before God} {that your rights are now mine}!” So Esau vowed to Jacob that he had traded his rights as the oldest son to him {for the soup}. **34**Then Jacob gave Esau {some of} the lentil soup with {some} bread, and Esau {quickly} ate the meal and left. In that way, Esau treated his birthright {carelessly} as if it had no value.

Chapter 26

God Establishes His Covenant with Isaac

1Now there was {another} severe food shortage in the region. {This was} a different shortage from the one that had happened {years} before, while Abraham was still alive. So Isaac {and his family} went to {the city of} Gerar to {ask for help from} King Abimelech, who ruled over the Philistines. **2**Then Yahweh appeared to Isaac and commanded {him}, “Do not go to {the country of} Egypt, {rather} stay in this land where I tell you {to live}. **3**Live {as a foreigner} in this region, and I will stay with you and prosper you. In fact, I will give all the {surrounding} regions to you and your descendants, and I will continue {to keep} the vow that I made to your father Abraham **4**that I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky. I will also give them all these regions. In fact, through your descendants {I} will bless all the people groups on the earth. **5**{I will do all that} because Abraham obeyed me and did everything that I ever commanded {him} {to do}.”

Isaac Lies about His Wife Rebekah to the Philistines

6Then Isaac {did what God said and} settled {with his family} in {the city of} Gerar. **7**Now Rebekah {was} very beautiful, so the men in that city started asking {Isaac} about her. Isaac was afraid they might kill him in order to

have her, so he {lied and} told {them} she {was} his sister. **8**{One day} after Isaac had lived there a long time, the Philistines' King Abimelech looked down from a window {of his palace} and saw to his surprise that Isaac was showing affection to his wife Rebekah. **9**So Abimelech summoned Isaac and scolded {him}, "It is obvious that Rebekah {is} actually your wife! So why did you tell us that she {is} your sister?" Isaac answered him, "{I said that} because I thought someone might kill me in order to have her {as a wife}." **10**Then Abimelech scolded {him} {further}, "You have treated us very badly! Sooner or later, one of my men could have slept with your wife, and you would have caused us to be guilty {of adultery}!" **11**Then {King} Abimelech warned all {his} people, "I will definitely execute anyone who harms Isaac or his wife!"

Isaac Has Conflict with the Philistines over His Wells

12Isaac planted crops in that area, and that year he gathered {a huge harvest that was} a hundred times {more than what he had planted}. Yahweh continued to bless him, **13**so that he became richer and richer until he was extremely wealthy. **14**He owned many sheep and cattle and {he also owned} many servants. As a result, the Philistines were jealous of Isaac. **15**So they filled up with dirt all the wells that the servants of his father Abraham had dug while he was {still} alive.

16Then {King} Abimelech said to Isaac, "{Please} move away from us, because you are so powerful {that you are a threat} to us." **17**So Isaac moved from {the city of} Gerar and pitched his tents in the Gerar Valley and stayed there {for a while}. **18**Then Isaac {had his servants} dig the dirt out of the wells that Abraham's servants had dug and {that} the Philistines had {just} filled {with dirt}. He gave the wells the same names that his father had given them.

19Next Isaac's servants dug {at a new place} in the valley and discovered a source of fresh water there. **20**But the herdsmen from {the city of} Gerar argued with Isaac's herdsmen and said, "That well is ours!" So Isaac named the well Esek, {which means "argument,"} because they argued with him {about it}. **21**Then Isaac's servants dug another well, but Gerar's herdsmen argued {with them} about that one too, so Isaac named it Sitnah, {which means "hostility."} **22**Then Isaac {and his family} moved from there and he {had his servants} dig a third well. {This time} Gerar's herdsmen did not argue about it, so he named it Rehoboth, {which means "space,"} because he said, "Finally Yahweh has provided space for us, so that we will prosper in the land."

23From there Isaac {and his family} went south to {the city of} Beersheba. **24**That night Yahweh appeared to him and said {to him}, "I {am} the God whom your father Abraham serves. Do not be afraid, because I {will always be} with you. I will bless you and make your descendants numerous, just as {I promised} to Abraham, who serves me." **25**So Isaac built an altar there {at Beersheba} and worshiped Yahweh by name. He also set up his tents there, and his servants started digging {another} well there {too}.

26Then {King} Abimelech went to Isaac from {the city of} Gerar with his adviser Ahuzzath and his army commander Phicol. **27**Isaac asked them, "Why have you come to me, {especially} since you have been hostile toward me and forced me to move away from you?" **28**They answered {him}, "It is very obvious to us that Yahweh is with you {and blessing you}, and we decided that we should make a vow with you {to live in peace with one another}. So {please} let us make a {peace} treaty with you, **29**that you will never harm us, just as we never harmed you, but only treated you well and sent you away in peace. {As a result,} Yahweh has now blessed you." **30**Then Isaac prepared a feast, and they {all} ate and drank {together}. **31**Early the next morning they got up and made vows to one another {that they would keep their treaty}. Then Isaac said goodbye to them, and they went home from him in peace.

32That {same} day Isaac's servants came to inform him about the well that they had been digging and announced, "We have struck water!" **33**So Isaac named the well Shebah, {which means "vow."} That is why {even} today the name of that city {is} still Beersheba, {which means "well of the vow."}

Esau’s Foreign Wives

34When Esau was forty years old, he married {two} Hittite women: Judith, whose father was Beeri, and Basemath, whose father was Elon. **35**Isaac and Rebekah were very distressed that their son had married foreign women {rather than a woman from their own religion and people group}.

Chapter 27

Jacob Steals Esau’s Blessing from Their Father Isaac

1One day when Isaac was an old man and he could no longer see, he sent for his older son Esau and said to him, “My son.” Esau answered him, “Yes, {sir}?” **2**Then Isaac told {him}, “Please listen {closely}: I am an old man {now} {and} I do not know when I will die. **3**So then, get your bow and arrows, go out in the open country and hunt {some} deer {meat} for me. **4**Next {use the meat to} cook a delicious meal for me the way that I like it, and bring it to me to eat so that I can bless you before I die.”

5Rebekah overheard what Isaac said to his son Esau. So after Esau had gone out to the open country to hunt, **6**she said to her son Jacob, “Listen, I {just} overheard your father tell your brother Esau **7**to get him {some} deer {meat} and {use it to} cook a delicious meal for him to eat. Then before he dies, he wants to bless Esau with Yahweh as his witness. **8**So then, my son, listen to me and do what I tell you {to do}. **9**Please go {out} to our flock {of goats} and get for me two of the best young goats. I will {use the meat from them to} cook a delicious meal for your father, {just} the way that he likes it. **10**Then you can take the meal to your father to eat, so that he will bless you before he dies.”

11But Jacob responded to his mother, “As you know, my brother Esau has hairy skin, but I have smooth skin. **12**What if my father feels my skin? He will {recognize me and} realize that I am trying to deceive him. Then he will curse me instead of blessing me.” **13**But his mother replied, “{If that happens,} may God curse me instead of you, my son. Just listen to me, and go get {two goats} for me!” **14**So Jacob went {to the flock} and selected {two goats} and took {them} to her. Then she cooked a delicious meal the way that his father liked it. **15**She also got her older son Esau’s finest clothes that she had in the house and had her younger son Jacob put them on. **16**And she used the goat skins to cover Jacob’s arms and the part of his neck that had no hair {on it}.

17Then she handed the delicious meal to Jacob, including some bread that she had baked. **18**He took the meal to his father and said, “Father.” His father answered, “Yes? Which of my sons {are} you?” **19**Jacob replied to his father, “I am Esau, your oldest son. I have done what you requested me {to do}. {So now} please sit up and eat some of the deer {meat} that I have cooked {for you}, so that you can bless me.” **20**But Isaac asked him, “How were you able to find {the deer} so quickly, my son?” Jacob answered, “Yahweh, {who is} the God who takes care of you, helped me to succeed.”

21Then Isaac said to him, “My son, please come here so that I can feel you and make sure that you are really my son Esau.” **22**So Jacob stepped closer to his father Isaac, and his father felt him and thought {to himself}, “{Hmm,} his voice {sounds like} Jacob’s voice, but {his} arms {feel like} Esau’s arms.” **23**So Isaac was not able to identify who Jacob was because his arms felt hairy like his brother Esau’s. Isaac was about to bless Jacob, **24**but {first} {he wanted to be completely sure, so} he asked {him}, “Are you really my son Esau?” Jacob answered, “{Yes,} I am.” **25**So Isaac said {to him}, “Serve me {the meal} so that I can eat some of your deer meat and bless you.” Then Jacob served {the meal} to his father and he ate {it}. Jacob also served him wine and he drank {it}.

26Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Come here and kiss me, my son.” **27**So Jacob went over {to his father} and kissed him {on the cheeks}. {As he did that,} his father recognized the fragrance of Esau’s clothes, so he blessed him and said,

“Ahh, my son, you smell {wonderful}

like the fragrance of a field

that Yahweh has caused to flourish!

28I ask God to provide you {and your descendants} {plenty of} rain from the sky {for your crops and animals}

and riches from the earth,

including abundant harvests and {much} wine.

29I also ask God to cause nations to serve

and honor you {and your descendants}.

You will rule over your brother's descendants,

and they will {submit to you and} bow down to you.

Whoever curses you {God} will curse,

but whoever blesses you {he} will bless."

Esau Gets "Blessed" Too by His Father Isaac

30As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and right after Jacob had left his father's presence, Jacob's brother Esau returned {home} from hunting. **31**Then he too cooked a delicious meal, and he took {it} to his father {Isaac} and said to him, "Father, {please} sit up and eat some of your son's deer meat so that you can bless me." **32**But his father asked him, "Which son {are} you?" Esau answered, "I {am} your oldest son Esau." **33**Then Isaac {became so upset that his body} shook very violently, and he asked {Esau}, "Who {was} it then that hunted deer meat and brought a meal to me? I finished eating it just before you came, and I blessed him. So God will definitely bless him." **34**When Esau heard what his father said, he shouted out with a very loud and distressed shout and begged his father, "{Please} bless me too, father!" **35**But his father responded, "Your brother came {to me} and tricked {me} and stole the blessing that I was planning to give you." **36**Then Esau exclaimed, "The name Jacob fits him exactly, because he has tricked me like this two times {now}! {First} he stole my rights as the oldest son, and now look {what he has done}: he has stolen my blessing!"

Then Esau begged {his father}, "Is there still a way you can {ask God to} bless me?" **37**Isaac answered, "Listen, I have {already} appointed Jacob to be your master. In fact, I have asked {God to make it so} that you and all your descendants will serve him {and his descendants}. Besides that, I have {also} blessed him with {abundant} harvests and wine. So then, there is no way left for me to bless you, my son!" **38**But Esau continued to beg his father {and say}, "Father, isn't there {just} one more way that you can bless {me}? {Please} bless me too, father!" Then Esau started crying loudly. **39**Finally his father said to him,

"Listen, you {and your descendants} will live

in a place where the land is not good {for farming}

and where there is not much rain.

40You {and your descendants} will have to fight battles to stay alive,

and you will serve your brother {and his descendants}.

But when you rebel {against them},

you will get free from their control over you."

Jacob Flees from Esau

41After that Esau held a grudge against Jacob because their father had blessed him. So Esau thought to himself,
"Soon my father will die; then after we {bury him and} mourn for him, I will kill my brother Jacob." **42**But Rebekah
heard about what her oldest son Esau was planning, so she sent for her youngest son Jacob and told him, "Listen,
your brother Esau is planning to take revenge on you and kill you. **43**So then, my son, listen to me: Hurry {and}
escape to {the city of} Haran to my brother Laban! **44**Live with him for a short time until your brother is no longer
angry {with you}. **45**When he is not angry with you anymore and he forgets what you did to him, I will send word
that it is safe for you to come {back home} from there. I do not want to lose both of you {on} the same day!"

46Then Rebekah complained to Isaac, "My life is {very} miserable because of our Hittite daughters-in-law {whom
Esau married}! If Jacob were to {also} marry a local Hittite woman like that, I would not want to keep on living!"

Chapter 28

1So Isaac summoned Jacob, blessed him and told him, "You must not marry a Canaanite woman. **2**{Instead} you
must go right away to {the region of} Paddan Aram, to the home of your mother's father, Bethuel, and marry one
of your uncle Laban's daughters. **3**I pray that God, {who is} all-powerful, will bless you and give you many children
and increase {the number of} your descendants, so that you become {the ancestor of} many people groups. **4**I
{also} pray that he will bless you and your descendants the same way that he blessed Abraham, so that you will
own this land where you have been living as a foreigner, {the same land} which God gave to him." **5**Then Isaac sent
Jacob {on his way}, so Jacob started traveling to Laban{'s house which was} in {the region of} Paddan Aram. {Laban
was} the son of Bethuel the Aramean and {also} the brother of Rebekah, {who was} Jacob and Esau's mother.

Esau Marries Another Wife

6Now Esau had seen Isaac bless Jacob and send him to {the region of} Paddan Aram to marry a woman from there.
As Isaac was blessing him, {Esau heard} him tell Jacob not to marry a Canaanite woman. **7**{Esau also saw that}
Jacob obeyed their father and mother and started traveling to Paddan Aram. **8**That is when Esau realized that his
father Isaac did not approve of {his sons marrying} Canaanite women. **9**So in addition to the {two} wives he already
had, Esau went to {the family of} Abraham's son Ishmael and married Ishmael's daughter Mahalath, whose brother
was Nebaioth.

Jacob Dreams about a Stairway to Heaven

10{After} Jacob left from {his family's home} {in the city of} Beersheba, he started traveling to {the city of} Haran.
11{That evening} he reached a {good} place {to sleep}, so he stopped there {for the night} because the sun had set.
He chose {one} of the stones that was there and used it as a pillow. Then he lay down and went to sleep. **12**While he
was dreaming, he saw a stairway. The bottom of the stairway was on the ground and its top reached up to heaven,
and he saw God's angels going up and coming down on the stairway. **13**And there standing at the top {of the
stairway} was Yahweh, and he said {to Jacob}, "I {am} Yahweh, the God whom your ancestors Abraham and Isaac
serve. I will give you and your descendants this land that you are lying on. **14**They will be {as numerous} as the dust
{specks} on the ground, so that they live throughout this land in every direction. Because of you and your
descendants, I will bless all the families in the world. **15**Remember that I {will always be} with you. I will protect you
wherever you go, and I will lead you back to this land. In fact, I will never leave you and I will do everything that I
have promised you {that I will do}."

16Suddenly Jacob woke up from his dream and exclaimed {to himself}, "Yahweh definitely lives in this place, but I
did not know {it} {before now}!" **17**He was afraid, so he {also} exclaimed, "This is a terrifying place! This can only be
God's house! It {must be} the entrance to heaven!"

18Early the next morning Jacob got up, took the stone that he had used as a pillow and set it up {on its end} to mark the place {where God had appeared to him}. Then he poured {some} {olive} oil on top of the stone {to dedicate the place to God}. **19**He named that place Bethel, {which means “house of God.”} Previously the name of that town had been Luz.

20Then Jacob made a vow {to God} and said, “God, if {you} will stay with me and protect me as I travel on this journey and if you provide me food to eat and clothes to wear, **21**so that I return safely to my father’s home, then Yahweh, {you} will be the God whom I serve. **22**This stone that I have set up will be your house and mark the place {that you appeared to me}, and I will give back to you a tenth of everything that you give to me.”

Chapter 29

Jacob Meets Rachel and Laban in the City of Haran

1Then Jacob left {Bethel} and continued traveling {until he came} to the land in the east where various people groups lived. **2**{When he arrived there,} he looked {around}, and he saw a well in an {open} field. There were three flocks of sheep lying near the well {waiting for water}. That was the well that flocks drank water from, but there was a {heavy,} large stone covering the top of the well. **3**{Every day} shepherds would bring all the flocks {of sheep} there. They would {work together to} remove the stone from the top of the well and draw water for the sheep. Then they would put the stone back over the top of the well.

4Jacob asked the shepherds, “My friends, where do you live?” They replied, “We {are} from {the city of} Haran.” **5**So Jacob asked them, “Do you know Laban, Nahor’s grandson?” They answered, “{Yes,} we do.” **6**So Jacob asked, “Is he doing well?” They answered {him}, “{Yes,} {he is} well. In fact, here comes his daughter Rachel {now}, bringing {his} sheep.” **7**Then Jacob urged {them}, “Look, the sun is still bright, and {it is} too early to gather the flocks {for the night}. {You ought to} draw water for them and take {them} back out {to the fields} to graze {some more}.” **8**But they replied, “We can’t {do that} until all the shepherds are here with their flocks. Then {together} we will move the stone away from the top of the well and draw water for the sheep.”

9While Jacob was still talking with the shepherds, Rachel arrived {at the well} with her father {Laban}’s sheep; it was her job to take care of them. **10**As soon as Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of his uncle Laban with her father’s sheep, he walked over {to the well}, removed the stone that covered it, and drew water for his uncle’s sheep. **11**Then he kissed Rachel {on her cheek} and {he was so happy that} he started crying. **12**Then he told her that he {was} her father’s nephew, the son of {her aunt} Rebekah. So she ran home and told her father {the news}.

13When Laban heard about his sister’s son Jacob, he ran {out} to greet him. Then he hugged him and kissed him {on the cheeks} and took him to his house. Then Jacob told Laban {about himself and} everything that had happened, **14**and Laban exclaimed to him, “There is no doubt that you {are} a close relative of my family!”

Jacob Works for Laban to Marry Rachel and Leah

After Jacob had stayed with Laban {and worked for him} {for} an entire month, **15**Laban said to him, “{Just} because you are my nephew, {that does not mean that} you should {have to} work for me for free! Tell me what you want me to pay you.” **16**Now Laban had two daughters: The name of the older {one} {was} Leah, and the younger {one} was Rachel. **17**Leah had pretty eyes, but Rachel was extremely beautiful in every way. **18**Jacob was in love with Rachel, so he said {to Laban}, “I will work seven years for you if you will let me marry your younger daughter Rachel.” **19**Laban replied, “{I agree to your terms.} I would {much} rather give her to you {to marry} than give her to someone else. {So} stay here {and work for me}.” **20**So Jacob worked seven years {for Laban} so that he could marry Rachel, but he loved her so {much} that to him the time seemed {to pass quickly} like {only} a few days.

21{When the seven years were over,} Jacob said to Laban, “{Please} let me marry {your daughter} {Rachel} {now} so
that I can live with her {as} my wife, because I have finished my {seven} years {of work} {for you}.” **22**So Laban
invited all the local people and held a {wedding} feast. **23**But that evening Laban {tricked Jacob and} brought his
daughter Leah {to Jacob’s tent} {instead of Rachel}, so that he had marital relations with her. **24**Laban also gave his
female servant Zilpah to Leah {to be} {her} {personal} servant.

25But the next morning Jacob was shocked to see that it was Leah {he had married}! So he complained to Laban,
“You have treated me very badly! {You know that} Rachel is the one I served you for! So why did you trick me?”
26Laban replied, “It is not our custom here for the younger {daughter} to marry before the older {daughter}
{marries}. **27**{So then,} {keep Leah as your wife and} finish this week of celebrating your marriage to her. Then our
family will also give you {my} younger daughter {to marry} if you will work for me for another seven years.”

28So Jacob {agreed with Laban and} did what he said: he finished celebrating his marriage to Leah that week. Then
Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to marry. **29**Laban {also} gave his servant Bilhah to Rachel to be her servant.
30Then Jacob had marital relations with Rachel, and he loved her more than {he loved} Leah. Then he {started}
working for Laban for seven more years.

Jacob’s Children

31Now Yahweh knew that Jacob did not love Leah, so he made it possible for her to have children, but Rachel was
not able to conceive. **32**Then Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben, {which
means “See, a son!”} because she exclaimed, “Now that Yahweh has seen that I am suffering {and helped me},
surely my husband will love me!”

33Then Leah became pregnant again and gave birth to {another} son. She exclaimed, “Since Yahweh heard that my
husband does not love me, he has given me this child also.” So she named him Simeon, {which means “he hears.”}

34Then Leah became pregnant {yet} again and gave birth to another son, and she exclaimed, “Now finally my
husband will want to be with me because I have given him three sons!” That is why his name was Levi, {which
means “be with.”}

35Once again Leah became pregnant and gave birth to another son, and she exclaimed, “Now I will praise Yahweh!”
That is why she named him Judah, {which means “praise.”} Then Leah stopped having children {for a while}.

Chapter 30

1Meanwhile {when} Rachel realized that she was not able to bear {any} {children} for Jacob, she was jealous of her
sister, and she demanded of Jacob, “Help me have children, or else I want to die!” **2**Jacob became very angry with
Rachel and responded, “I am not God! He is the one who has prevented you from having children!” **3**Then Rachel
told {him}, “You can have my servant woman Bilhah {as a wife}. Have {marital} relations with her so that she will
have children for me, so that I too can have a family.” **4**So Rachel gave Jacob her servant Bilhah to be {another} wife
{for him}, and Jacob had {marital} relations with her.

5Then Bilhah became pregnant and had a son for Jacob, **6**and Rachel exclaimed, “God has judged in my favor! Yes
indeed, he has answered my prayer and given me a son!” That is why she named the baby Dan, {which means “he
judged in my favor.”}

7Then Rachel’s servant Bilhah became pregnant again and had a second son for Jacob. **8**Then Rachel exclaimed, “I
have had a difficult contest with my sister, and {now} I have defeated her!” Then she named that son Naphtali,
{which means “my contest.”}

9Now when Leah realized that she had stopped having children, she brought her servant Zilpah {to Jacob} and gave her to him to be {another} wife {for him}. **10**Then Zilpah had a son for Jacob, **11**and Leah exclaimed, “I am so fortunate!” So she named him Gad, {which means “fortunate.”}

12Then Leah’s servant Zilpah had a second son for Jacob, **13**and Leah exclaimed, “{God} has truly blessed me! Now {other} women will know that {God} has blessed me.” So she named that son Asher, {which means “blessed.”}

14Then {one day} during the season when people were harvesting wheat, Leah’s son Reuben went out in a field and found {some} fertility plants, and he gave them to his mother. {When Rachel found out about the plants,} she begged Leah, “Please give me some of the fertility plants that your son found.” **15**But Leah replied to her, “{No!} It was {bad} enough that you stole my husband {from me}! And {now} you even want to take my son’s fertility plants!” Rachel replied, “Alright then, Jacob can sleep with you tonight if you will give me your son’s fertility plants.”

16That evening when Jacob came {home} from {working in} the field, Leah went out to greet him and told {him}, “You must sleep with me {tonight}, because I have traded my son’s fertility plants for time with you.” So Jacob spent that night with Leah. **17**God answered {the prayers of} Leah, so that she became pregnant and had a fifth son for Jacob. **18**Then she said, “God has rewarded me for giving my servant to my husband {as a wife}.” So she named that son Issachar, {which means “reward.”}

19Then Leah became pregnant again and had a sixth son for Jacob. **20**Then she said, “God has given me a valuable gift, {so that} now my husband will honor me because I have had six sons for him.” So she named their son Zebulun, {which means “honor.”}

21{Sometime} after that, Leah had a daughter and named her Dinah.

22God had not forgotten Rachel, so he answered her {prayers} and made it possible for her to have children. **23**Then she became pregnant and had a son, and she exclaimed, “God has made it so that I am no longer ashamed!” **24**She named her son Joseph, {which means “may he give another,”} {because} she said, “I pray that Yahweh will give me another son.”

Jacob Becomes Very Rich Working for Laban

25After Rachel had Joseph, Jacob requested of Laban, “{Please} allow me to leave {here}, so that I can return to my {own} home in my {own} country. **26**Let me take my wives and my children, whom I have earned by working for you, so that I can leave {with them}. You yourself know how {well} I have worked for you.”

27But Laban responded to him, “Please be kind to me {and stay}, {because} I have found out from observing signs that Yahweh has blessed me because you {are here with me}.” **28**Then he added, “Tell me what you want your pay to be, and that is what I will pay you.” **29**Jacob replied to him, “You yourself know how {hard} I have worked for you and how {well} your animals have prospered under my care. **30**The few that you owned before I came have multiplied dramatically. Yes, Yahweh has blessed you because of me. But now, I need to also provide for my {own} family!”

31So Laban asked {him}, “What can I pay you {to persuade you} {to stay here}?” Jacob answered, “Do not pay me anything. Just do this {one} thing for me, and I will continue taking care of your flock{s}: **32**Let me look through all your flock{s} today and separate out from them all the lambs that are speckled, spotted or dark-colored, and {all} the young goats that are spotted or speckled. They will be my pay. **33**That way {too}, in the future it will be easy {for you} to know whether {or not} I am being honest whenever you check the animals you have paid me. {If you see that I have} any {sheep or} goats that are not speckled or spotted or any lambs {that are not} dark-colored, {you will know that} I stole them {from you}.”

34Laban replied, “I agree, let’s do exactly as you have suggested.” **35**But that {same} day, Laban separated {from his flocks} {all} the he-goats that had stripes or spots, and all the she-goats that had speckles or spots, all that {had any} white {marks} on them, together with all the dark-colored lambs. Then he told his sons to take care of {them},

36and he {and his sons} took {those animals} a three-day walking-distance away from Jacob. Meanwhile Jacob continued taking care of the rest of Laban's flock{s}.

37Then Jacob cut {some} branches from poplar {trees}, almond {trees}, and chestnut {trees}, and made white streaks on them {by peeling off long strips of bark}, which exposed the white {wood} that was inside the branches. **38**Then he put those {streaked} branches in all the drinking troughs that the flock{s} would come to drink from, so that the flock{s} would see the branches. {That way, whenever} the animals that were ready to mate came {to the troughs} to drink, **39**they would see the branches as they were mating. As a result, they would have {young that were} striped or speckled or spotted. **40**Then Jacob separated those young animals {from Laban's flocks} {to form new flocks for himself}, and he put {the rest of} the flock{s} with the striped and dark-colored {animals} in Laban's flock{s} {so that they would mate and have young that were striped or dark-colored}. In that way, {over time} he created separate flocks {of sheep and goats} for himself that he kept separate from Laban's flock{s}.

41Whenever the stronger female animals were ready to mate, Jacob put the {streaked} branches in the {drinking} troughs in front of those animals so that they would see the branches as they were mating. **42**But whenever the weaker female animals {were ready to mate}, Jacob did not put {the branches} {in the troughs}. In that way, {the young from} the weaker {animals} were Laban's and {the young from} the stronger {animals} were Jacob's. **43**So Jacob became extremely wealthy. He owned large flock{s} {of sheep and goats}, and {many} male and female servants and {many} camels and donkeys.

Chapter 31

Jacob and His Family Flee from Laban

1Then {one day} Jacob heard that Laban's sons were {complaining and} saying, "Jacob has taken {for himself} everything that our father owned. In fact, he has gotten all his riches by taking {the animals} that were our father's!" **2**Jacob also noticed that Laban no longer acted friendly toward him the way he did in the past. **3**Then Yahweh told Jacob, "Return to your ancestors' homeland, where your relatives live, and I will stay with you {and help you}."

4So Jacob sent a message to Rachel and Leah that they should meet him at the field {where he was with} his flock{s} {of sheep and goats}. **5**{When they arrived,} he said to them, "I have noticed that your father no longer acts friendly toward me the way he did in the past, but the God whom my father serves has stayed with me {and has helped me}. **6**You {both} know how I have worked for your father as hard as I could, **7**but he has cheated me by changing what he pays me ten times. However, God has not permitted him to hurt me. **8**{For example,} every time that he told {me} that the speckled {animals} would be my pay, all {the female animals in} the flock{s} gave birth to speckled {young}. But whenever he {changed his mind and} told {me} that the striped animals would be my pay, then they all gave birth to streaked {young}. **9**In that way, God has taken your father's animals {from him} and has given {them} to me.

10"One time during the season when the flock{s} {of sheep and goats} were mating, I had a dream. {In the dream} I looked around and was surprised to see that the {only} male goats {and sheep} that were mating with the female goats {and sheep} {were} striped, speckled, or blotched. **11**Then an angel from God called to me in the dream, 'Jacob!' and I answered, 'Yes, {Lord}?' **12**Then he said {to me}, 'Look around and notice {that} all the male goats {and sheep} that are mating with the female goats {and sheep} {are} striped, speckled, or blotched. {I have caused that to happen,} because I have noticed all {the wrong things} that Laban has been doing to you. **13**I am the God {who appeared to you} at {the town of} Bethel, where you poured oil on top of a memorial stone {to dedicate the place to me}, {and} where you made an oath to me. {So} then, get ready {and} leave this land {immediately}, and go back to your home land.'"

14Then Rachel and Leah responded to Jacob, "We will not inherit anything from our father {when he dies}! **15**It is obvious that he treats us like strangers {and not family}. For example, he sold us {to you}, and then he spent all the

money that should have been ours. **16**In fact, all the wealth that God has taken from our father {rightfully} {belongs} to us and our children. So then, {you should} do everything that God has told you {to do}."

17So Jacob {quickly} got ready {for the journey} and helped his wives and his children {get up} onto some camels. **18**Then he {started} herding {the camels and} all his {other} animals toward the region of Canaan where his father Isaac lived. {He took with him} all his possessions that he had accumulated, {including} all the livestock that he had acquired {while living} in {the region of} Paddan Aram.

19Now {before that,} Laban {the Aramean} had gone away {for several days} to shear his sheep. {While her father was gone,} Rachel {entered his tent and} stole his idols {that he worshiped}. **20**At the same time, Jacob {also} deceived Laban by fleeing {secretly} without telling him that he was leaving. **21**So {in that way} Jacob ran away {with his family} and {took} everything that they owned. They quickly crossed the {Euphrates} River and headed toward the hill country of Gilead.

Laban Chases After Jacob and His Family

22Three days later someone informed Laban that Jacob had run away. **23**So Laban took {some of} his relatives with him and chased after Jacob {and his family} for seven days until they overtook him in the hill country of Gilead. **24**But that night God appeared to Laban in a dream and warned him, "Be sure that you do not threaten Jacob in any way."

25{By the time that} Laban caught up with Jacob, Jacob had {already} set up his tents in the hill country {of Gilead}, so Laban and his relatives {also} set up camp there {at a place nearby}. **26**Then {the next day} Laban {met with Jacob and} complained to him, "Look what you have done! You have deceived me and dragged away my daughters like prisoners of war! **27**You should not have deceived me and secretly run away! You should have told me {you were leaving}! {If I had known,} we could have {held a feast and} sung joyful songs {and danced} together, with tambourines and lyres playing, before sending you {on your way}. **28**You did not {even} let me kiss my daughters and my grandchildren {before they left}! What you have done is foolish! **29**I have the power to harm {all of} you, but last night {in a dream} the God whom your father serves warned me not to threaten you in any way. **30**Now then, {I understand that} you left because you were so homesick to return to your father's family, {but} why did you steal my gods?"

31Jacob answered Laban, "{We left secretly} because I was afraid. I thought that {if I told you we were leaving,} you might take your {two} daughters from me {by force}. **32**{However we did not take your gods. In fact,} if you find your gods with anyone {here}, that person will die {for stealing them}! {So} while our relatives are watching, {go ahead and} search {all} my belongings for yourself. {If you find} anything that is yours, take it." {When Jacob said that,} he did not know that Rachel {was the one who} had stolen the idols.

33So Laban started searching in Jacob's tent. Then {he searched} through Leah's tent and through the two servant women's tent, but he did not find {anything} {that belonged to him}. Next after he left those tents, he went into Rachel's tent. **34**Now Rachel had hidden the idols inside {her} camel saddlebag, and she was sitting on them. So although Laban searched through everything {else} in the tent, he could not find them. **35**{As he was searching,} Rachel said to him, "Sir, {please} do not be upset that I am not able to get up to greet you, because it's that time of the month {when I feel weak}." {That is also why} he could not find {his} idols when he searched {her tent}.

36Then Jacob became {very} angry {at Laban} and confronted him by saying to him, "Tell me my crime! Tell me what sin I have done {against you} that gives you the right to chase after me! **37**Now that you have searched through all my things, did you find anything {that anyone took} from your household? {If so,} put {it} here in front of our relatives, so that they can decide which one of us is right!

38"For twenty years I {have worked} for you! {During all that time} your sheep and your goats had no trouble bearing young, and I have never {killed and} eaten {any} animals from your flocks. **39**Whenever wild animals killed {any of} your animals, I never brought {the dead animal} to you {to prove I was innocent}. {Rather,} I replaced them

at my own expense. {Besides that,} you required me to pay for {any} animals {that anyone ever} stole {at any time of} day or night. **40**That was my situation! During the days, I suffered from the hot sun, and during the nights it was so cold that I could not sleep. **41**{It was like} that for me {during the entire} twenty years that I was with you. I worked for you for fourteen years in order to marry your two daughters, and {I worked} {another} six years to earn flocks {of animals} from you, even though you changed my pay ten times. **42**If God, whom my ancestors Abraham and Isaac serve and revere, had not been with me {to take care of me}, there is no doubt that I would now be leaving {here} with {absolutely} nothing. {But} God knows how {much} you have mistreated me and how hard I have worked {for you}, so last night he rebuked {you}."

Jacob and Laban Establish a Peace Treaty with Each Other

43Then Laban responded to Jacob, "These women {are} my daughters, and their children {are} my grandchildren, and these flock{s} {are} {also} mine. In fact, all that you see {here} is mine! But there is nothing I can do today to keep my daughters or their children near me {any longer}! **44**So then, you and I should make a {peace} treaty {with each other}, and there should be something to remind us {to keep that treaty}." **45**So Jacob picked out a {large} stone and set it up {on its end} {as} a monument {to mark the place where they made their treaty}. **46**Then he told his relatives, "Gather {some more} stones." So they {all} gathered stones and put them in a {large} pile. Then everyone ate {a meal together} there next to the pile {of stones}. **47**Laban gave the pile the {Aramaic} name Jegar Sahadutha, {which means "pile that reminds,"} while Jacob gave it the {Hebrew} name Galeed, {which has the same meaning}. **48**Laban said {to him}, "{Starting} today this pile {of stones} will remind you and me {about our peace treaty}." That is why the name of that place is Galeed. **49**{Another name for the place is} Mizpah, {which means "watchtower,"} because Laban said {to Jacob}, "May Yahweh watch both of us {to make sure that we keep our treaty} while we are apart from each other. **50**If you treat my daughters badly, or if you marry {other} wives besides them, remember {that} {even if} no one {else} is watching us, God is {always} watching both of us {to hold us accountable}."

51Then Laban {also} said to Jacob, "Here is this pile {of stones}, and here is this monument which we stood up between us {to remind us about our peace treaty}. **52**This pile {of stones} and this monument {both} remind us that I must never go past this pile {to attack you}, and that you must never go past this pile and this monument to attack me. **53**May {your grandfather} Abraham's God and {my grandfather} Nahor's gods, {which were also} their father {Terah}'s gods, judge between us {and punish us if we break this agreement}!" But Jacob made a vow by the God whom his father Isaac revered {that he would keep their treaty}, **54**and he burned {the body of} an animal {on an altar} as a sacrifice {to God} on the mountain. Then he invited his relatives to eat a meal {together} {there}. So they {all} ate the meal {together} and spent the night there.

55Early the next morning Laban got up and kissed his grandchildren and his daughters {goodbye} {on the cheeks} and asked God to bless them. Then he {and his men} left {from there} and returned home.

Chapter 32

Jacob Prepares to Meet Esau

1Meanwhile Jacob continued on his journey {toward home} {with his family}, and {some} angels from God met him. **2**When Jacob saw the angels, he exclaimed, "This is God's army!" So he named that place Mahanaim, {which means "two armies."}

3Then Jacob sent {some} messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau {who was living} in the region of Seir, {which was also called} the country of Edom. **4**{Before they left,} he ordered them, "This {is what} you must tell my master Esau: 'I, your servant Jacob, want you to know that I have been staying with {our uncle} Laban all this time. **5**I {now} own {many} cattle, donkeys, and flocks, as well as {many} male and female servants. I have sent this message to {you,} sir, hoping that you will be kind {to me} {when I arrive}.'"

6{After the messengers delivered Jacob's message,} they returned to Jacob and reported {to him}, "We went {and spoke} to your brother Esau. Now he is on his way {here} to meet you, but {there are} {also} 400 men {coming} with him!" **7**{When Jacob heard that,} he was very frightened and worried. So he put {all} the people {and animals} that were with him into two {large} groups, including {his family, his servants and} {all} his flocks {of sheep and goats}, herds {of cattle} and camels. **8**{He did that} because he thought, "If Esau {and his men} come and attack one group, then the other group might {be able to} escape."

9Then he prayed, "{Dear} Yahweh, the God whom my grandfather Abraham and my father Isaac served, you told me to go back to my country where my relatives live, and that you would cause me to prosper. **10**I am not worthy of how kind and faithful you have always been to {me} as I have served you. When I {first} crossed this Jordan {River}, all that I owned was my walking stick, but now my family and belongings are enough to form two {large} groups. **11**Please rescue me {now} from my brother Esau, because I am afraid that he {and his men} will come and attack me {as well as} {these} mothers and {our} children! **12**But you promised me that you would greatly prosper me, and that you would make my descendants {as numerous} as {the grains of} sand on the seashore, which are so numerous that no one can count them all."

13Then Jacob spent the night there, and {during that time} he selected many of his animals to give to his brother Esau, **14**{including} 200 female goats and twenty male goats, 200 female sheep and twenty male sheep, **15**thirty mother camels with their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, {and} twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. **16**Jacob put his servants in charge of the animals, with each kind {of animal} in a separate group. Then he ordered his servants, "Go ahead of me, {one group at a time,} and keep {some} distance between each group {of animals}." **17**He {also} ordered the servant in charge of the first group {of animals}, "When my brother Esau meets you and asks you, 'Who is your master, and where are you headed? And who do these {animals} belong to {that you are driving} ahead of you?' **18**then you are to tell {him}, 'Esau, sir, these {animals} belong to Jacob who {humbly} serves you. He has sent them to you as a gift. In fact, he is following us {here}.'"

19In the same way, Jacob ordered the servants who were in charge of the second and third groups {of animals}, and all {the servants} who were in charge of the {other} groups, "When you meet Esau, tell him the same thing {that I told the first servant}. **20**Especially be sure to tell {him} that his servant Jacob is following you {there}." {Jacob did all that,} because he thought that if he sent the gifts {of animals} ahead of himself {to Esau}, then Esau would stop being angry at him. He was hoping that when Esau saw the gifts, he would {forgive him and} welcome him when they met in person. **21**So Jacob's servants {went} ahead of Jacob with the {animal} gifts {for Esau}, while Jacob {and his family} stayed {behind} in the camp that night.

Jacob Wrestles with God, Who Names Him Israel

22{Later} that {same} night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two servant wives and his eleven sons across a shallow place in the Jabbok {Stream}. **23**{After} he had taken them across the stream, he {went back and} had his servants take {all} his {animals and other} belongings across {the stream} {too}. **24**Then Jacob was {there} by himself {for a while}, and a man {came and} fought with him until daybreak. **25**When the man realized that he was not able to defeat Jacob, he struck him on his hip, so that it went out of place as they fought with each other. **26**Then the man said {to him}, "Let go of me, because it is daybreak!" But Jacob replied, "{No!} I will not let go of you until you {first} bless me!" **27**So the man asked him, "What {is} your name?" He answered, "{My name is} Jacob." **28**Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but {rather it will be} Israel, {which means "he who wrestles with God,"} because you have wrestled with God and with people, and you have won."

29Then Jacob asked {the man} to tell him his name. But he replied, "There is no need for you to ask {me} what my name is!" Then the man blessed Jacob there. **30**So Jacob named the place Peniel, {which means "God's face,"} because {he exclaimed}, "I saw God's face {here}, but {yet} he allowed me to live!"

31The sun was shining as Jacob left Penuel {and returned to his family}. He was limping {as he walked} because of his hip {injury}. **32**That is why even today the people of Israel do not eat meat that comes from an {animal's} hip joint, because that is the place on Jacob's hip that God struck {and injured}.

Chapter 33

Jacob Reunites with Esau and Settles in {the City of} Shechem

1Then Jacob looked and saw {in the distance} that Esau was coming {toward him}, and with him {were} 400 men! So Jacob {quickly} divided up {his} children among Leah, Rachel and {his} two servant wives. **2**He put his servant wives and their children first {in line}, then Leah with her children behind them, and Rachel with {her son} Joseph last. **3**Then Jacob himself went ahead of them {all} {toward his brother}. As he got closer to him, he bowed {with his face} to the ground seven times {to show respect}.

4But Esau ran to greet Jacob and hugged him. He held him tightly and kissed him {on the cheeks}, as they {both} cried {for joy}. **5**Then Esau looked ahead and noticed the women and children {who were there}, so he asked {Jacob}, "Who {are} these {people}? {Do they belong} to you?" Jacob answered {him}, "{They are} {the wives and} the children whom God has kindly given to me, sir." **6**Then the {two} servant wives with their children came forward, and they {all} bowed {to the ground} {in front of Esau} {to show respect}. **7**Next Leah and her children also came forward and bowed {to the ground}. Then last {of all}, Joseph and {his mother} Rachel came forward, and they {also} bowed {to the ground}.

8Then Esau asked {Jacob}, "Why did you send all those herds {of animals} that I encountered?" Jacob answered {him}, "{They are gifts for you} so that you will be kind to me, sir." **9**But Esau replied, "My brother, I {already} have enough {animals}, {so} keep them for yourself." **10**But Jacob insisted, "Please do not refuse {my gifts}. {Rather,} if you want to be kind to me, then {please} accept these gifts from me. After all, for me to see your face is like seeing God's face, especially since you have welcomed me {so kindly}. **11**{So} please accept my gift {of animals} that I sent to you, because God has been kind to me, so that I have all {that I need}." Jacob kept insisting {that Esau accept the animals from him} until {finally} he accepted {them}.

12Then Esau suggested {to Jacob}, "Let's start traveling {home}, and I will accompany you." **13**But Jacob replied to him, "Sir, as you know, {my} children {are} fragile, and I need {to be careful with} {all} the sheep and cattle that are nursing {their young}. If I force the animals to go too far {for} {even} one day, all of them will die. **14**{So then,} sir, please go on {home} ahead of me, sir. I will travel along slowly at a safe pace for the animals and the children that are with me, until we reach you in {the region of} Seir."

15So Esau responded, "{Okay, then} please let me leave with you some of my men {to escort you}." But Jacob replied, "There is no need {for you} to do that. {Just} please {continue to} be kind to me, sir." **16**So that {same} day Esau {and his men} started on their way back {home} to {the land of} Seir. **17**Meanwhile, {instead of going to Seir,} Jacob {and his family} traveled to {the town of} Succoth. There he {and his men} built houses for himself {and his family}, and they built {some} shelters for his animals. That is why the name of that place is Succoth, {which means "shelters."}

18{After that,} Jacob {and his family} continued their journey {home} from Paddan Aram, until they arrived safely at the city of Shechem in the region of Canaan. Then they set up their tents {in a field} near that city. **19**{While he was there,} he bought the land where he had set up his tents for a hundred pieces {of silver} from the descendants of Hamor, {who was} the father of Shechem. **20**Jacob {also} built an altar {out of stones} on that land, and he named it El Elohe Israel, {which means "God is the God of Israel."}

Chapter 34

Shechem Rapes Dinah, and Jacob's Sons Take Revenge

1Then {one day} Dinah, {who was} the daughter of Jacob and Leah, went out to visit with {some of} the local
women. **2**The chief of that region was a Hivite named Hamor. His son Shechem saw {how beautiful} Dinah was, so
he grabbed {hold of} her and raped her. **3**Shechem admired Jacob's daughter Dinah so much that he fell in love
with her and spoke sweetly to her {to try to woo her}. **4**Then Shechem said to his father Hamor, "Negotiate {things}
for me so that I can marry this girl."

5When Jacob found out that Shechem had dishonored his daughter Dinah, his sons were {still} {out} in the fields
taking care of his animals, so he didn't say anything {about it} until they returned {home}. **6**Meanwhile, {Shechem
and} his father Hamor went to talk to Jacob. **7**Soon Jacob's sons returned {home} from the fields. When they heard
{what had happened}, they were shocked and extremely angry that Shechem had dishonored {the people of} Israel
by raping Jacob's daughter. No one should ever do such a {horrible} thing! **8**But Hamor urged Jacob and his sons,
"My son Shechem deeply loves your daughter {and sister}. {So} please allow him to marry her. **9**{In fact,} let's allow
marriage between our two people groups, {so that} your daughters can marry our {young men} and your {young
men} can marry our daughters. **10**You can live among us. The land is available for you {to choose what you want};
live {in it} {wherever you want}. You can {also} trade {freely} here, and you can buy {your own} {land}."

11Then Shechem said to Dinah's father and brothers, "{Please} be kind to me {and let me marry her}. Then I will pay
{you} whatever you request from me {for her}. **12**Set the bride-price and {marriage} gifts {that I must pay} {for her}
as high as you want, and I will pay {you} whatever you ask from me. {Just please} give the young woman to me to
marry."

13But since Shechem had dishonored their sister Dinah, Jacob's sons replied to him and his father Hamor in a
deceitful way. **14**They said to them, "It would not be acceptable for us to let our sister marry a man {like you} who is
not circumcised, because that would dishonor our family! **15**The only way that we can agree with your proposal {is}
if {first} you {and your people} become like us by circumcising all of your males. **16**{If you do that,} then we will
allow your {young} men to marry our daughters, and {we will allow} your daughters to marry our {young men}. We
will {also} live among you {in this land}, so that we become one people group. **17**However if you refuse to agree
with our requirement that you circumcise {your people}, then we will take our sister and move {somewhere else}."

18What Jacob's sons said seemed good to Hamor and his son Shechem. **19**So right away Shechem, who was the
most respected member in his family, started to do what they required, because he was thrilled with Jacob's
daughter. **20**In fact, he and his father Hamor went {straight} to their city entrance {for a town meeting}, and they
told the elders of their city {about Jacob and his sons}, **21**"These people are friendly toward us, so {let's} allow them
to live in {our} land and trade {freely} here. After all, there is more than enough space in the land for them {too}.
{Besides that,} {then} our {young} men can marry their daughters, and their {young} men can marry our
daughters. **22**There is just one thing: They will only agree to live among us and become one people group {with us}
if we circumcise all our males so that we are like them. **23**{But if we do that,} {all} their property, {including} their
livestock and all their {other} animals will belong to us! {So} let's just agree to do what they require so that they will
live among us!"

24All {the men} who were leaders of the city agreed with Hamor and his son Shechem, so they circumcised every
male in the city, including themselves.

25Three days later, when the men of {the city of} Shechem were {all} {still} sore {from being circumcised}, two of
Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, {who were} Dinah's brothers, took their swords and attacked the city, with no one
opposing them. They killed all the men {there} **26**with their swords, including Hamor and his son Shechem. Then
they got Dinah from Shechem's house and left {the city}. **27**{Next} {all} Jacob's sons went {into the city} and took
everything valuable from the dead bodies and from {the rest of} the city. {They did that,} because {that was where}

Shechem had dishonored their sister. **28**They plundered whatever was in the city and in the {surrounding} fields, including the people's flocks {of sheep and goats}, their herds {of cattle} and their donkeys. **29**They carried away all the valuable things the people of Shechem had owned, including everything that was in their houses. They also captured their women and children.

30Later Jacob scolded Simeon and Levi {by saying}, "You have brought me {serious} trouble by causing the Canaanites and Perizzites who live in this land to hate us!" I {only} have a few men {to defend us}, so if they {all} join {forces} against us and attack us, they will destroy us and {the rest of} our family!" **31**But Simeon and Levi responded, "Shechem should not have treated our sister like a whore!"

Chapter 35

God Blesses Jacob at {the Town of} Bethel

1Then God commanded Jacob, "Leave here and move to {the town of} Bethel. Build an altar there {and offer sacrifices on it} to worship {me as} the God who appeared to you {there} when you were running away from your brother Esau." **2**So Jacob told his family and everyone else who {was} with him, "Get rid of the idols you have that other people groups worship. Also wash and make yourselves clean and put on clean clothes. **3**Then we will leave here and move to {the town of} Bethel. There we will build an altar and worship God because he helped me during the time when I was in trouble. He has {always} been with us {and taken care of us} everywhere that we have gone." **4**So they gave Jacob all their idols and {all} their earrings. Then Jacob buried all those things at the base of the oak tree that {was} near {the city of} Shechem.

5Then Jacob and everyone with him left that place, and God caused {the people in} the surrounding towns to be terrified, so that they did not attack Jacob's family. **6**He and his family {continued traveling} in the region of Canaan, and they arrived at {the town of} Luz, which {also has the name} Bethel. **7**There Jacob built an altar, and he named the place El Bethel, {which means "the God of Bethel,"} because that is where God had {first} appeared to him when he was running away from his brother.

8{While they were there,} Deborah died. She was the servant that had helped raise {Jacob's mother} Rebekah {when she was young}. Jacob buried her body at the base of an oak tree, {in the valley} near {the town of} Bethel. So he named the place Allon Bacuth, {which means "oak tree of mourning."}

9Now that Jacob had returned from {the region of} Paddan Aram, God appeared to him {at Bethel} again. {There} God blessed him **10**and said to him, "{Although} your name {has been} Jacob, that will no longer be your name. Rather, you will have the name Israel!" So {once again} God gave Jacob the name Israel.

11Then God {also} said to Jacob, "I am Almighty God. Have many children so that you {and your descendants} become {very} numerous. Your descendants will become many people groups, and some of your descendants will be kings. **12**{Besides that,} the land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I {also} give to you and your descendants {who live} after you." **13**After God finished talking to Jacob, he left him there and went up {to heaven}.

14Then Jacob stood a {large} stone up {on its end} at the place where God had talked to him, to mark the place {as special}. Then he poured some wine and some {olive} oil on the stone marker {to thank God and dedicate the place to him}. **15**Since God had talked to Jacob at that place, Jacob named it Bethel, {which means "God's house."}

Rachel Dies Giving Birth to Benjamin

16Later Jacob and his family moved on from Bethel and headed for {the town of} Ephrath. While they were still some distance from there, {his wife} Rachel went into labor, but she was experiencing great difficulty. **17**Then when her labor pain was at its worst, {the baby was born and} the woman who was helping her deliver exclaimed to her, "Do not despair! You {now} have another son!" **18**But Rachel was dying, and as her spirit was leaving her body, she

named her baby Benoni {which means “son of my sorrow”}. But {later,} his father {Jacob} changed his name to Benjamin, {which means “son of my right hand.”}

19After Rachel died, they buried her body beside the road to {the town of} Ephrath, which {also has the name} Bethlehem. **20**Jacob stood a stone up {on its end} on her grave {to mark where it was}. {In fact,} that {same} stone still marks Rachel’s grave today.

Jacob’s Twelve Sons

21Then Israel {and his family} moved on {from there} and set up their tents on the south side of the tower of Eder. **22**While they were living in that area, {Israel’s son} Reuben committed adultery with his father’s servant-wife Bilhah, and Israel found out {about it}.

{With the birth of Benjamin,} Jacob {now} had {a total of} twelve sons. **23**The sons {he had} with Leah {were} Reuben, {who was} his oldest {child}, then Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. **24**The sons {he had} with Rachel {were} Joseph and Benjamin. **25**The sons {he had} with Rachel’s servant Bilhah {were} Dan and Naphtali. **26**And the sons {he had} with Leah’s servant Zilpah were Gad and Asher. {All} those {are} the sons Jacob had {starting from the time that he lived} in {the region of} Paddan Aram.

Isaac Dies

27Then Jacob went {home} to his father Isaac {in the city of} Mamre, which {also has the name} Kiriath Arba or Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac {and their families} had lived for a while {as foreigners}. **28**Isaac lived to be 180 years old. **29**Then, after living a long, full life, he took his last breath and died, and he joined his ancestors {who had died before him}. Then his sons Esau and Jacob buried his body.

Chapter 36

Esau’s Descendants

1Here {is} a record about the descendants of Esau, whose {name} was {also} Edom. **2**Esau had married {two} Canaanite women. {Their names were} Adah, {who was} the daughter of a Hittite {man} named Elon, and Oholibamah, whose father was Anah and whose grandfather was a Hivite named Zibeon. **3**{Esau also married} Basemath, {who was} Ishmael’s daughter and Nebaioth’s sister.

4Adah had {a son} with Esau {whom they named} Eliphaz, while Basemath had {a son named} Reuel. **5**Oholibamah had {sons named} Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. {All} those {were} Esau’s sons whom he and his wives had {while they lived} in the region of Canaan.

6Later Esau moved away from his brother Jacob. He took {with him} his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the {other} members of his household, as well as his livestock and all {the rest of} his animals and all the {other} belongings that he had gotten in the region of Canaan. **7**The reason {he moved away} is that he and Jacob {both} owned so many animals that they could not live together {in the same area}. The land where they were staying was {just} not big enough to support them {both} because they had so many livestock. **8**That is how Esau {and his family} ended up living in the Seir Mountains. {That is the record about} Esau, that {is}, Edom.

9Here {is} a {more detailed} record of the descendants of Esau, {who was} the ancestor of the Edomites {who live} in the Seir Mountains. **10**{Two of} Esau’s sons {were} Eliphaz, whom he had with his wife Adah, and Reuel, whom he had with his wife Basemath. **11**Eliphaz {and his wife} had sons {they named} Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz. **12**Eliphaz and his servant-wife Timna had {a son they named} Amalek. Eliphaz’s sons {were} {all} grandsons of {Esau and} his wife Adah.

13Reuel's sons {were} Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. They were the grandsons of {Esau and} his wife Basemath.

14Esau and his wife Oholibamah had sons {whom they named} Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. {Oholibamah was} the daughter of Anah and the granddaughter of Zibeon.

15Here {is} {a record of} the descendants of Esau {who became} clan leaders: The sons of his firstborn {son} Eliphaz {who became} clan leaders {were} Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz, **16**Korah, Gatam, and Amalek. They {were} the clan leaders {who descended} from Eliphaz {and lived} in the land of Edom. They {were} {all} grandsons of Adah {and Esau}.

17The sons of Esau's son Reuel {who became} clan leaders {were} Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. They {were} the clan leaders {who descended} from Reuel {and lived} in the land of Edom. They {were} {all} grandsons of {Esau and} his wife Basemath.

18The sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah {who became} clan leaders were Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. They {were} the clan leaders {who descended} from {Esau and} his wife Oholibamah, {who was} Anah's daughter.

19{All} those {clan leaders} {were} the descendants of Esau, that {is}, Edom, and each one led his own family group.

Seir's Descendants

20Here is {a record of} the descendants of Seir the Horite who were {also} living in that land: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, **21**Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. They were the descendants of Seir {who became} clan leaders over the Horites in the land of Edom.

22Lotan's sons were Hori and Hemam, and his sister {was} Timna.

23Shobal's sons {were} Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho and Onam.

24Zibeon's sons {were} Aiah and Anah. This {is} {the same} Anah who discovered some hot springs while he was {out} in the desert grazing his father's donkeys. **25**Anah's children {were} {his son} Dishon and his daughter Oholibamah. **26**Dishon's sons {were} Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Keran.

27Ezer's sons {were} Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan.

28Dishan's sons {were} Uz and Aran.

29The Horites {who became} clan leaders {were} Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, **30**Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. Those {were} the Horite clan leaders. They led their own family groups {and lived} in the land of Seir.

The Rulers over the Land of Edom

31Here {is} {a record of} the kings who ruled over {the people of} the land of Edom before the Israelites had their own king. **32**Bela, {who was} the son of Beor, was the {first} king to rule over {the people of} {the land of} Edom. The name of his hometown {that he ruled from} {was} Dinhabah. **33**When {King} Bela died, Jobab, {who was} the son of Zerah, replaced him as king {and ruled} from {his hometown of} Bozrah. **34**When {King} Jobab died, Husham replaced him as king {and ruled} from {his hometown, which was in} the land where the Temanites lived. **35**When {King} Husham died, Hadad, {who was} the son of Bedad, replaced him as king. {King Hadad is the one} who defeated the Midianites {in battle} in the land of Moab. The name of his hometown {that he ruled from} {was} Avith. **36**When {King} Hadad died, Samlah replaced him as king {and ruled} from {his hometown of} Masrekah. **37**When {King} Samlah died, Shaul replaced him as king {and ruled} from {his hometown of} Rehoboth beside the {Euphrates} River. **38**When {King} Shaul died, Baal-Hanan, {who was} the son of Acbor, replaced him as king. **39**When

{King} Baal-Hanan died, Hadar replaced him as king, and the name of his hometown {that he ruled from} {was} Pau. His wife's name {was} Mehetabel, {who was} the daughter of Matred {and} the granddaughter of Me-Zahab.

40Here {are} the names of {more of} the clan leaders {who descended} from Esau; {each clan leader led} his own family group and ruled his own region that was named after him: Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, **41**Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, **42**Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, **43**Magdiel, {and} Iram. {All of} those {were} clan leaders over the Edomites; they {all} led their own settlements in the land that they controlled. This {concludes the record about} Esau, {who was} the ancestor of {all} the Edomites.

Chapter 37

Joseph's Dreams Anger His Brothers

1Jacob continued to live in the region of Canaan where his father {Isaac} had lived for a while {as a foreigner}.
2Here is {more of} the record about Jacob and his family: {One day} {his} seventeen-year-old son Joseph was taking care of the {family's} flocks {of sheep and goats}. Joseph was helping his brothers {who were} the sons of his father's {servant} wives Bilhah and Zilpah, and he told their father about the bad things they were doing.

3Now Israel, {that is, Jacob,} loved Joseph more than any of his other sons because he was born to him when he was old. So he made a {special} robe for Joseph that had many colors. **4**When Joseph's brothers realized that their father loved Joseph more than the rest of them, they hated him so much that they would not talk to him in a friendly manner.

5{One night} Joseph had a dream, and he told his brothers about it. That made them hate him even more {than before}. **6**{This is what} he told them, "Please listen to this dream that I had: **7**{In it} I saw us {working} out in a field {cutting and} tying bundles {of grain stalks}. Then suddenly the bundle that I had made stood up straight. Then I saw that the bundles you had made stood around {my bundle} and bowed down to my bundle {to show respect}."
8His brothers responded to him, "Do you really expect to be our king? You will never rule over us!" So they hated him even more {intensely} {than they did before} because of what he had said {to them} about his dreams.

9Then Joseph had another dream that he {also} told to his brothers. He said, "Listen, I {just} had another dream, and {in it} I saw that the sun, the moon, and eleven stars bowed down {to the ground} before me {to show respect}." **10**Later Joseph told {the same dream} to {both} his father and his brothers, but his father scolded him by saying, "That {is} a strange dream that you had! Do you really expect your mother and me and your brothers to bow down before you?" **11**So Joseph's brothers were jealous of him, but his father continued to think about what it all could mean.

Joseph's Brothers Sell Him as a Slave and He Is Taken to {the Country of} Egypt

12Sometime after that, Joseph's brothers took their father's flock{s} {of sheep and goats} to graze {in the fields} near {the city of} Shechem. **13**Then {one day} Israel said to Joseph, "As you know, your brothers are tending {our flocks} near {the city of} Shechem. Get ready so that I can send you to them." Joseph responded, "I'm ready {to go}."
14Then Israel told him, "Please go and check on how your brothers and the flock{s} are doing. Then report back to me {what you find out}." So Israel sent him {on his way} from {their home in} the valley near {the city of} Hebron, and Joseph traveled to {the city of} Shechem. **15**{When he arrived there,} a man saw him searching around in the {nearby} fields and asked him, "What are you looking for?" **16**He replied, "I am looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they are tending {their flocks}?" **17**The man answered, "They were here and then left, but I overheard them say that they were going to {the town of} Dothan."

So Joseph followed his brothers and caught up with them near {the town of} Dothan. **18**But they saw him while he was still some distance away, and before he reached them, they made plans to kill him. **19**They said to each other

{about him}, “Look, here comes that expert dreamer! **20**Come on, let’s kill him and throw his body into one of the pits {here}. Then we can tell {people} that a vicious animal ate him up, and we will watch if his dreams come true!”

21But Reuben heard {their plan}, so he {tried to} rescue Joseph from them by urging them, “We should not kill him.” **22**Then he continued, “You must not take his life. {Instead} put him into this pit {here} in the desert, but you must not harm him.” Reuben was planning to rescue Joseph from them and take him back {home} to their father.

23When Joseph reached his brothers, they {took hold of him and} ripped off the colorful robe that he was wearing. **24**Then they grabbed him and put him into the pit. The pit {was} empty and {completely} dry inside.

25Then {some of} Joseph’s brothers sat down to eat a meal. {While they were eating,} they looked around and noticed {that} a {large} group of Ishmaelite {traders} was traveling {toward them} from {the region of} Gilead. Their camels were loaded with {expensive} spices, healing salve, and incense {that} they were taking down to {the country of} Egypt {to sell there}. **26**So Judah urged to his brothers, “We will not gain anything by killing our brother and trying to hide it! **27**{Instead,} come on, let’s sell him to those Ishmaelite {traders} {over there} so that we will not be guilty of harming him. After all, he {is} a member of our family, our own brother.” Judah’s brothers agreed {with him}. **28**So when the Midianite {(that is, Ishmaelite)} traders came by {them}, {some of} Joseph’s brothers pulled Joseph up out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty {pieces of} silver. Then the Ishmaelites took him to {the country of} Egypt.

29Later Reuben came back to the pit, and he was shocked to see that Joseph was not there! So he tore his clothes {to show distress}. **30**Then he went to his brothers and exclaimed {to them}, “Joseph is gone! Now I do not know what to do!” **31**So Joseph’s brothers killed a young goat and dipped Joseph’s robe in the {goat’s} blood.

32Then they had someone take the colorful robe back to their father and say {to him} {for them}, “We found this {robe}. Please look at it {to see} whether or not it is your son’s.” **33**Jacob recognized the robe and exclaimed, “{This is} my son {Joseph}’s robe! Clearly a fierce animal has torn him to bits and eaten him up!” **34**Then Jacob tore his clothes {in grief}, put on mourning clothes, and for many days he mourned that his son had died. **35**All Jacob’s sons and daughters came {to him} {and tried} to console him, but he did not let them comfort him. Instead he said {to them}, “{No,} I will continue to mourn {for my son} until I {die and} go down to be with him in the afterworld.” So Joseph’s father continued to mourn for him.

36Meanwhile, in {the country of} Egypt, the Midianite {traders} sold Joseph to Potiphar, {who was} an officer under Pharaoh {the king of Egypt}; {he was} the captain over the {palace} guards.

Chapter 38

Judah and His Daughter-in-law Tamar

1About that time, Judah left his brothers and went down to {the town of} Adullam and stayed near {the home of} a man from there whose name {was} Hirah. **2**{While he was living} there, he met a Canaanite woman whose father {was} Shua, and he married her. Then he had {marital} relations with her, **3**and she became pregnant. When she gave birth, she had a son, whom Judah named Er. **4**Then Judah’s wife became pregnant again and gave birth to {another} son, and she named him Onan. **5**Then she {became pregnant} yet again and gave birth to another son, and she named him Shelah. When she gave birth to Shelah, Judah was at {the town of} Chezib.

6When Judah’s oldest son Er {grew up}, Judah arranged for him to marry a woman whose name {was} Tamar. **7**But Er did things that Yahweh considered to be evil, so Yahweh caused him to die.

8After that, Judah told {his son} Onan, “Marry your brother’s widow {Tamar} {according to our custom} so that you fulfill your obligation to her {as her brother-in-law} and have children {with her} for your {deceased} brother.” **9**However Onan knew that the children {they would have together} would not belong to him. So whenever he had

{marital} relations with Tamar, he wasted {his semen} on the ground to keep her from {getting pregnant and} having {any} children for his brother. **10**Yahweh considered what Onan did to be evil, so he caused him to die too.

11Then Judah told his daughter-in-law Tamar, “{Go and} live at your father’s house, and do not marry again until my son Shelah is old enough {to marry you}.” {Actually Judah did not want Shelah to marry Tamar} because he was afraid {that if he did,} he would also die like his brothers had. So Tamar went {home} to her father’s house and stayed there.

12After a long time, Judah’s wife, the daughter of Shua, died. After Judah finished mourning {for her}, {one day} he {decided to} go to {the town of} Timnah {to work} with {the men} who were shearing his sheep {there}. He and his friend Hirah, {who was} from {the town of} Adullam, {started traveling there together}. **13**Meanwhile someone told Tamar, “Listen, your father-in-law {Judah} is on his way to {the town of} Timnah to shear his sheep.” **14**So she changed from her clothes that showed she was a widow and covered her face with a {thin} headscarf and dressed herself {like a prostitute}. Then {she went} toward {the town of} Timnah and sat down near the gateway of {the town of} Enaim, which {was} along the way. {She did that} because she had noticed that Shelah was now old enough {to marry}, but Judah had not given her to him to marry {as he was supposed to do}.

15{As Judah was traveling to Timnah,} he saw Tamar {beside the road}, but since she had veiled her face {with a scarf}, {he could not see who she was, and} he assumed that she was a prostitute. **16**So he went over to where she was {sitting} beside the road and said {to her}, “Let me have sex with you.” {He did that} because he did not recognize that she was his daughter-in-law {Tamar}. So she asked {him}, “What will you pay me so that you can have sex with me?” **17**He answered {her}, “I will send {you} a young goat from my flock.” She replied, “{I will agree,} if you will give {me} something {valuable} {of yours} to keep until you deliver {the goat to me}.” **18**So Judah asked, “What do you want me to leave with you?” She answered {him}, “{Leave me} your name seal with its cord {that you have around your neck}, and your walking stick that you are holding.” So he gave {those things} to her. Then he had {sexual} relations with her, and she became pregnant from him. **19**After that, Tamar left {Judah} and returned {home}. Then she took off her scarf and put on her clothes that showed she was a widow.

20Meanwhile Judah sent a young goat with his friend {Hirah}, {who was} from {the town of} Adullam, to reclaim his things from the prostitute {whom he had given them to}. But {when Hirah looked for her,} he was not able to find her. **21**So he asked {some} men {who lived} near the place where she had been, “Where {is} the temple prostitute who was {sitting} beside the road near {the town of} Enaim?” But they answered {him}, “There has never been a temple prostitute around here.” **22**So Hirah returned to Judah and told {him}, “I was not able to find the prostitute. In fact, the men who live near that town claim {that} there has never been a temple prostitute around there.” **23**Then Judah said, “{Stop looking for her and} let her keep {my things} for herself. Otherwise everyone will make fun of us. Besides that, I {did try to} send this goat {to her}, but you were not able to find her.”

24About three months later, someone told Judah, “Your daughter-in-law Tamar has acted like a prostitute. In fact, look, {she is} {now} pregnant from doing that!” Judah responded {angrily}, “Take her outside {the town} and burn her {to death}!” **25**{So they went to get her, but} as they were taking her out {of the town}, she sent {a messenger} to her father-in-law {along with his things} and told the messenger to say, “The man who owns these things is the one who got me pregnant. Please identify {the man} who owns this name seal with its cord and this walking stick.” **26**Judah recognized {his things} and confessed, “Tamar is right, and I am wrong, because I refused to have my son Shelah marry her {as I was supposed to}!” {So they released Tamar,} and {after that} Judah never had {sexual} relations with her again.

27Months later, when Tamar was ready to give birth, they realized that {there were} twins inside her! **28**While she was in labor, {one of them} stuck out {his} hand. So the midwife {who was there} tied a {bright} red string around his wrist and said, “This {baby} was born first.” **29**But then the baby pulled his hand back inside, and suddenly his brother was born {first} {instead}. So the midwife exclaimed {to the baby}, “What a dramatic way for you to burst out!” That is why he was named Perez, {which means “break out.”} **30**After that, his brother, who {had} the {bright} red string on his wrist, came out. So he was named Zerah, {which means “brightness.”}

Chapter 39

Potiphar's Wife Tries to Seduce Joseph

1Now {as you know,} {some} Ishmaelite traders had taken Joseph down to {the country of} Egypt, and an Egyptian {named} Potiphar had bought him {as a servant} from them. Potiphar {was} {one of} {King} Pharaoh's officers, the captain over the king's {personal} guards. **2**As Joseph worked in his Egyptian owner's house, Yahweh was with him {and helped him}, so that he succeeded in everything he did. **3**His owner realized that Yahweh {was} with him and was helping him to succeed in everything that he did. **4**So Potiphar was pleased with Joseph and made him his personal servant. He also put him in charge of managing his household and taking care of everything {else} {that} he owned. **5**From the time {that} Joseph's Egyptian owner did that, Yahweh blessed the household of that Egyptian {man} for Joseph's sake. He blessed everything that belonged to him, {including} {everything} in {his} home and in {his} fields. **6**In fact, after Joseph's owner put him in charge of everything that he owned, he did not {need to} concern himself with anything {in his household} except for {personal matters like} {deciding} what {kind of} food {he wanted} to eat.

Joseph was well-built and good-looking. **7**So after a while, his owner's wife started looking at him {with desire} and told {him}, "Come to bed with me!" **8**But Joseph refused and said to her, "Listen, because of me, my owner does not {have to} concern himself with anything that {is} in {his} house. In fact, he has put me in charge of everything that he owns, **9**{so that} he has no one in his household who has more authority than I do. He has given me freedom with everything {in his household}, except you, {of course,} because you {are} his wife. So there is no way I would {ever} sin against God by doing such an evil thing!" **10**Day after day Potiphar's wife kept pressuring Joseph to go to bed with her, but he refused her requests and stayed away from her.

11Then one day Joseph went to {his owner's} house {as usual} to do his work, but no other menservants from the household were there. **12**So Potiphar's wife {saw her chance and} grabbed {hold of} Joseph by his robe {and} demanded, "Come to bed with me!" But {immediately} he fled and left his robe in her hands as he ran outdoors. **13**As soon as she saw that Joseph had run outdoors and left his robe {behind} in her hands, **14**she summoned the {other} menservants from her household. Then {when they arrived,} she exclaimed to them, "Look, my husband brought {this} Hebrew servant {here} among us to make fools of us! He came here to rape me, but I screamed loudly {for help}! **15**Then as soon as he heard me scream like that, he left his robe with me and ran outdoors!"

16So Potiphar's wife kept Joseph's robe with her until {her husband,} Joseph's owner, returned home. **17**Then she told him the same story. She said, "The Hebrew servant whom you brought among us came here to make a fool of me! **18**But as soon as I screamed loudly, he left his robe with me and ran outdoors!" **19**When Joseph's owner heard what his wife said his servant had done to her, he became very angry. **20**So he {had soldiers} arrest Joseph and put him in the prison where they kept people who had committed crimes against the king.

Joseph remained there in prison, **21**but Yahweh was with him and was kind to him and caused the prison warden to be pleased with him, {so that he treated him well}. **22**So {before long} the warden put Joseph in charge of all the {other} prisoners who {were} in that prison, so that he {was the one who} managed everything that they did there. **23**The warden did not {need to} pay attention to anything at all that Joseph was in charge of, because Yahweh was with Joseph and enabled him to succeed at everything he did.

Chapter 40

The Head Wine-server's and Head Baker's Dreams

1Sometime after that, the {head} wine-server and the {head} baker disobeyed their master, {who was} {Pharaoh,} the king of Egypt. **2**As a result, {King} Pharaoh was furious with those two officers. **3**So he {had his soldiers arrest them and} put them in prison at the captain over the guards' house, in the same prison where Joseph was. **4**{There}

the captain over the guards appointed Joseph to {take care of} them, so he served them, and they remained in prison {for} some time.

5One night the king of Egypt's wine server and baker each had a dream while they were in prison. Each {one's} dream had its own meaning. **6**The next morning, when Joseph came to {serve} them, he noticed that they looked sad. **7**So he asked them, "Why do you look {so} unhappy today?" **8**They answered him, "We {each} had a dream {last night}, but there is no one {here} who can tell {us} what our dreams mean." Joseph replied, "God is the {only} one who gives someone the ability to interpret {the meaning of dreams}. Please tell me {what you dreamed}."

9Then the head wine-server told Joseph what was in his dream. He said, "While I was dreaming, I saw a vine in front of me **10**that had three branches. Soon buds started forming {on the branches}. {Then} {the buds} became flowers, {and the flowers} became bunches of ripe grapes. **11**Next I was holding {King} Pharaoh's cup, and I picked grapes {from the vine} and squeezed juice from them into the cup. Then I handed the cup to Pharaoh {and he drank from it}."

12Joseph said to him, "This {is} what your dream means: The three branches {represent} three days. **13**In three days {King} Pharaoh will summon you and give you back your job, so that you will {again} serve wine to him, as you used to do when you were his wine-server. **14**When {you are out of prison and} everything is going well for you, please remember that I was {here} with you, and please be kind to me and mention my situation to {King} Pharaoh so that he releases me from this prison. **15**People brought me {here} by force from the land where {my people,} the Hebrews, live. Even here {in Egypt} I have done nothing {wrong} to deserve being in a dungeon."

16When the head baker heard the positive meaning that Joseph gave {for the first dream}, he told him, "I also {had a dream}, and while I was dreaming, I saw three bread baskets {stacked} on my head. **17**In the top basket {there were} many {kinds} of bread and cakes for {King} Pharaoh {to eat}, but {some} birds were gobbling them {up} from the basket."

18Joseph said {to him}, "This {is} what your dream means: The three baskets {represent} three days. **19**In three days {King} Pharaoh will {have his soldiers} chop off your head and impale your body on a {sharp} pole, where vultures will eat {all} your flesh off your bones."

20Then sure enough, three days later {it was} {King} Pharaoh's birthday, and he invited all his officers to attend a banquet. {During the banquet,} he {had soldiers} bring {his} head wine-server and head baker {to the banquet} in front of {all} his {other} officers. **21**Then he returned the head wine-server to his {former} work, so that he {again} served wine to him. **22**But he {had his soldiers execute} the head baker {and} impale {his body on a pole}. {Everything happened} exactly the way Joseph had explained {their dreams} to them.

23However the head wine-server {completely} forgot about Joseph and did not remember {to tell Pharaoh about} him.

Chapter 41

Joseph Explains the Meaning of Pharaoh's Dreams

1Two whole years later, {King} Pharaoh had a dream. {In the dream} he saw himself standing beside the {Nile} River. **2**Suddenly, seven healthy-looking, fat cows walked up out of the river and started eating the tall grass {beside the river}. **3**Next he saw that seven sickly-looking, scrawny cows walked up out of the river and stood next to the {first} cows on the river bank. **4**Then the sickly-looking, scrawny cows devoured the seven healthy-looking, fat cows. {Just} then Pharaoh woke up.

5Then he went {back} to sleep and had a second {dream}. {This time} he saw seven plump, well-formed heads of grain growing on the same plant. **6**Suddenly, seven small heads of grain that the {hot} desert wind had dried out

started growing {on the same plant} beside the first heads. **7**Next, the small heads of grain gobbled up the seven
big, well-formed heads. At that point, Pharaoh woke up and realized that {he had been} dreaming.

8The next morning Pharaoh was upset {about the dreams}, so he had {servants} summon all the sorcerers and
{other} scholars in {the country of} Egypt. {When they arrived,} he told them what he had dreamed, but none of
them was able to explain to him {what} the dreams {meant}. **9**Then the head wine-server said to Pharaoh, "{Sir,}
today I remember {the time} when I offended {you}. **10**{Some time ago,} {King} Pharaoh, you were angry with your
officials, {including} me and the head baker, and you put us in prison at the captain of the guards' house. **11**{While
we were there,} one night we {each} had a dream, {and} each of our dreams had a different meaning. **12**There was
a young Hebrew man with us {who was} a servant for the captain over the guards. After we told him {our dreams},
he explained them to us. He told us what each of our dreams meant. **13**And sure enough, everything happened
exactly the way he had explained {the dreams} to us: you returned me to my {former} work {as your wine-server},
and you {had your soldiers} execute the baker."

14{When Pharaoh heard that,} {immediately} he had {servants} summon Joseph. So they went right away and got
him out of the prison. Then after he shaved {his head and face} and changed into appropriate clothing, he went
before Pharaoh. **15**Then Pharaoh said to him, "I had a dream, but no one has been able to explain {to me} what it
means. But someone told me about you, {that} when you hear a dream, {you are able} to explain what it means."
16Joseph replied to him, "{Sir,} I do not have that ability {on my own}, {but} God will explain {your dream} so that
{you,} {King} Pharaoh, will have peace {in your heart}."

17So Pharaoh told Joseph, "As I was dreaming, I saw myself standing beside the {Nile} River. **18**Then suddenly, seven
fat, healthy-looking cows walked up out of the river {onto the bank} and started eating the tall grass {that was
there}. **19**Suddenly seven other cows walked up {out of the river} behind the first cows; {they were} in terrible
condition, very sickly-looking and scrawny. {In fact,} I have never seen such awful-looking {cows} anywhere in the
land of Egypt! **20**Then the scrawny, sickly cows devoured the seven fat ones. **21**But {even} after they had swallowed
them, no one would {ever} know that they had devoured them, because they {still} looked just as terrible as before.
That's when I woke up.

22"Then I {went back to sleep and} had {another} dream. {This time} I saw that there were seven big, well-formed
heads of grain growing on the same plant. **23**Then suddenly, seven small heads of grain sprouted {on the same
plant} next to the first heads. {These had} wilted because the {hot} desert wind had dried them out. **24**Then the
small heads of grain gobbled up the seven well-formed ones. I told {my dreams} to {my} sorcerers, but none of
them could explain to me {what the dreams meant}."

25Then Joseph told {King} Pharaoh, "{Your Majesty,} {both of} your dreams mean the same thing. {Through them,}
God is revealing to you what he is going to do. **26**The seven healthy cows {represent} seven years, and the seven
well-formed heads of grain {represent} {the same} seven years. {Both} dreams mean the same thing. **27**The seven
scrawny and sickly cows that walked up {out of the river} behind the first cows {represent} {a different} seven
years, and {so do} the seven small heads of grain that the desert wind had dried out. {They both mean that} there
will be a famine that lasts seven years. **28**{King} Pharaoh, that {is} what I was talking about {when I told} you {that}
God is revealing to you what he is going to do. **29**Listen, {first} there will be seven years when people will have more
than enough food {to eat} throughout the entire country of Egypt. **30**But after that, there will be a famine that lasts
seven years. As a result, the people in Egypt will forget what it was like in their country during all the years when
they had more than enough {food} {to eat}, because the famine will devastate the country {so that many people
will starve}. **31**That's right, people will completely forget about the years when there was plenty of food, because
the famine {that comes} after that {will be} so severe. **32**The fact that you, {King} Pharaoh, had two {different}
dreams that mean the same thing shows that God has decided what he is going to do, and he will make it happen
soon.

33"So now, {your Majesty,} I recommend that you look for a man {who is} intelligent and knows what to do, and put
him in charge over the country of Egypt. **34**Sir, you should {also} appoint {regional} administrators in charge of the
country, and {have them} collect one-fifth of {the crops that people harvest throughout} the country during the

seven years when harvests are plentiful. **35**Have them collect all that {surplus} grain during the prosperous years ahead {when there will be plenty of food}. Using your authority, {King} Pharaoh, have them stockpile {that} grain {in storehouses} in the cities and {have soldiers} guard it, so that there will be food {for the people}. **36**That food should stay in storage for {the people of} the country {to eat} during the famine that will last seven years in the country of Egypt, so that they will not starve to death because of the severe lack of food."

Joseph Becomes the Governor over the Country of Egypt and Stores Up Food

37What Joseph proposed seemed like a good plan to Pharaoh and all his officials. **38**So Pharaoh exclaimed to them, "{Certainly} we cannot find anyone else more qualified than this man whom God's Spirit guides!" **39**Then he said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, no one {else} is {as} intelligent as you {are} or knows what to do {in this situation}. **40**{So} I am putting you in charge of my household {and my kingdom}, so that all the people in my country must obey whatever you command. Only I who am king will have higher authority than you." **41**Then Pharaoh said, "Listen, I hereby put you in charge of the whole country of Egypt." **42**Then he took off his {official} identification ring and put it on Joseph's finger {to show that he had appointed him}. He {also} gave Joseph {expensive} linen clothes to wear and put a chain {made} of gold around his neck. **43**Then Pharaoh had Joseph ride {around} in the chariot that showed he was the second highest ruler in the country. {As he rode,} messengers {walked} {in the road} ahead of him calling out {to everyone}, "Make way!" In that way, Pharaoh {officially} appointed Joseph to be in charge of the whole country of Egypt.

44Pharaoh {also} told Joseph, "I, Pharaoh, {hereby command} that throughout the whole country of Egypt, everyone must only do what you tell them to do!" **45**Then Pharaoh gave Joseph the {Egyptian} name Zaphenath-Paneah, {which means "the one who explains/reveals secrets,"} and he gave him {a woman named} Asenath to be {his} wife. {She was} the daughter of Potiphera, {who was} a priest {at the temple} in {the city of} On. Then Joseph {started his duties and} traveled throughout the country of Egypt.

46Joseph {was} thirty years old when he {started} serving Pharaoh, the king over Egypt. {After Pharaoh appointed him,} Joseph left him and traveled throughout the whole country of Egypt {doing his work}. **47**During the seven years when food was plentiful, the land produced huge amounts of grain. **48**So Joseph {had his helpers} collect all the {surplus} grain {that people harvested} during {those} seven years in the country of Egypt, and he {had them} stockpile {that} grain in the cities. In each city he {had them} store the grain {that people harvested} from the surrounding fields. **49**In that way, Joseph stockpiled so much grain that it was as {plentiful as} the {grains of} sand on the seashore. {In fact,} it was so plentiful that he stopped keeping records {of it} because it was too much to keep track of.

50Before the {seven} famine years started, Joseph had two sons with {his wife} Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, {who was} a priest in {the city of} On. **51**Joseph named {his} oldest {son} Manasseh, {which means "forget,"} {and he explained,} "{It is} because God has helped me to forget {about} all my troubles and about {how much I have missed} my father and the rest of my family {back home}." **52**And he named {his} second son Ephraim, {which means "twice prosperous,"} {and he explained,} "{It is} because God has helped me to prosper in the country where I have suffered {so much}."

53Finally the seven years were over when food was plentiful in the country of Egypt. **54**Then the seven years began when there was a severe lack of food, which is exactly what Joseph had predicted {would happen}. The famine spread to every country, but throughout the whole country of Egypt there was {still} food {in the storehouses}. **55**When everyone in Egypt became very hungry {because of the famine}, they begged {King} Pharaoh for food. So he commanded them, "Go ask Joseph {for help}, {and} do whatever he commands you {to do}." **56**Since the severe food shortage was affecting the whole country, Joseph {had his helpers} open up all the storehouses {full of grain}, and he started selling {the grain} to the people of Egypt. Then the famine became worse {and worse} throughout the country of Egypt. **57**In fact, {people from} all over the world started coming to Egypt to buy {grain} from Joseph, because the food shortage was {so} terrible throughout the whole world.

Chapter 42

Joseph's Brothers Come to Egypt to Buy Grain

1Meanwhile {back in the region of Canaan}, {when} Jacob heard that there was grain {for sale} in {the country of} Egypt, he told his sons, "Do not just {stand around} doing nothing! **2**Listen {to this}! I heard that there is grain {for sale} in {the country of} Egypt. {So} go down there and buy {some} for us {and our families} {to eat}, so that we can stay alive and not starve to death." **3**So Joseph's ten {older} brothers {left home and} traveled down to Egypt to buy {some} grain {there}. **4**But Jacob did not allow Joseph's {younger} brother Benjamin to go {to Egypt} with {the rest of} his brothers, because Jacob was afraid that something bad might happen to him.

5Israel's sons arrived {in Egypt} along with {many} other people who were coming {there} to buy {food}, because the severe food shortage was {also} {affecting everyone} in the region of Canaan. **6**{Since} Joseph {was} the administrator over the country {of Egypt}, he {was} the one selling {grain} to people {who came to him} from all over the country. So Joseph's brothers {also} went before him {like everyone else} and bowed down {with} {their} faces to the ground {to show him respect}. **7**When Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended that he did not {know} {them}. In fact, he spoke to them sternly and asked them, "What country are you from?" They answered {him}, "{Sir,} {we are} from the region of Canaan to buy {some} grain." **8**Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not realize who he was.

9Then Joseph remembered what he had dreamed about his brothers {long ago}, so he accused them, "You are secretly gathering information {about our country}! You came {here} to find out where {our} country is weak!" **10**But his brothers replied to him, "Sir, we are not {spies}. Rather, {we are} humble men {who} have come {here} {only} to buy {some} grain. **11**We {are} all brothers who have the same father. We {are} humble, trustworthy men, not spies."

12But Joseph accused them, "{That is} not {true}! You have definitely come {here} to find out where {our} country is weak!" **13**But they replied {to him}, "Sir, {there were} twelve of us brothers. We {are} sons of the same father {who lives} in the region of Canaan. {Our} youngest {brother} {is} with our father right now, but {our other} brother has died."

14But Joseph accused them, "What I told you is true! You are spying {on our country}! **15**{So now,} this is how I will verify whether {or not} you {told me the truth}: As certain as {King} Pharaoh lives, {I swear that} you will {definitely} never leave Egypt until your youngest brother is here. **16**{So} one of you must go {back home} and bring your {youngest} brother back {here}. {The rest of} you must stay here in prison. That way I can verify {whether} you told me the truth. But if you are lying, as certain as {King} Pharaoh lives, {that means} you really are spying {on our country}!" **17**Then Joseph {had his soldiers} lock up his brothers in prison {for} three days.

18Three days later, Joseph said to them, "I am a man who reveres God. So if you do what I say, {I will let} you live. **19**Since you {claim to be} trustworthy men, I will make {just} one of you brothers stay where you have been, in prison. {The rest of} you {may} go {and} carry food back {home} {for} your hungry families. **20**But you {must} bring your youngest brother {back} {here} to me. That way I will know that you are telling the truth, and I will let you live." So Joseph's brothers {agreed to} do what he said.

21{While they were still standing there,} they said to each other, "Surely what we did to our brother {Joseph} {long ago} was {very} wrong. We saw how he was suffering when he begged us {not to harm him}, but we refused to listen {to him}. That is why we are suffering now." **22**Reuben scolded them by saying, "I told you {that} you should not do anything bad to him! But you refused to listen {to me}, and now look, God is holding us responsible for causing him to die!" **23**Joseph's brothers did not realize that he {could} understand {what they were saying to each other}, because he had been speaking to them using a translator {as if he did not know their language}. **24**{When Joseph heard what they were saying,} he turned his back to them and started crying. Then {after he recovered,} he turned back around and spoke to them {again}. Then he chose Simeon from {among} them and {had his soldiers} bind him {with chains} while they watched.

25Then Joseph told {his servants} to fill his brothers' sacks {with} grain. {He} also {told them} to {secretly} put in each brother's sack the money {they had paid for the grain} and to provide them {with} food to eat on their trip {home}. After Joseph did that for his brothers, **26**his brothers loaded their {sacks of} grain onto their donkeys' {backs} and started traveling {home}.

27Later, {when they stopped} at a place to stay for the night, one {of them} opened his sack to get {some} grain to feed his donkey. There in the top of his sack he saw the money that he had used {to buy grain}! **28**So he exclaimed to the others, "Somebody has returned my money {to me}! Here it is in my sack!" {When they saw it,} they were {completely} shocked, and they shook {with fear}. They asked each other, "Why is God doing this to us?"

29{When} they reached {their home in} the region of Canaan where their father Jacob was, they told him everything they had experienced. They said, **30**"The man who governs the country {of Egypt} spoke to us sternly and accused us of spying {on} {their} country! **31**But we told him, 'We {are} trustworthy {men}; not spies. **32**{There were} twelve of us brothers, {and} {we are} the sons of the same father. One {of our brothers} has died, and the youngest {brother} {is} {at home} with our father right now in the region of Canaan.'

33"But the man who governs the country told us, 'This is how I will know if you {are} trustworthy {men}: You must leave one of you {here} with me, and {the rest of you} go {home} with {food for} your starving families. **34**But bring your youngest brother {back} {here} to me. Then I will know that you {are} trustworthy {men} and not spies. {Then} I will return your brother to you {from prison}, and you can travel around my country {and trade} {freely}.'"

35Then Joseph's brothers started emptying their sacks {of grain}, and there inside each man's sack was his bag of money {that he had paid for the grain}! {When} they and their father {Jacob} saw the {money} bags, they were terrified. **36**Then their father exclaimed to them, "You have caused me {terrible} loss! Joseph is gone! Simeon is gone! And {now} you {want to} take Benjamin {away} {from me} {too}! Everything is going terribly for me!"

37Reuben replied, "{Father,} let me be responsible for {taking} Benjamin {down to Egypt}. If I fail to bring him {back} to you {safely}, you can {punish me by} killing my two sons." **38**But his father replied, "{No,} I will not let my son {Benjamin} go down {to Egypt} with you. His brother is dead, so he is the only son {I have} left {from his mother}. So if anything bad happened to him on {your} journey, you would cause me, your elderly father, to grieve so badly that I would {die and} go down to the afterworld!"

Chapter 43

Joseph's Brothers, including Benjamin, Return to the Country of Egypt

1The famine {continued to be} severe in the region {of Canaan}. **2**So when Jacob and his family finished eating {all} the grain that his sons had brought from {the country of} Egypt, he said to them, "Go back {to Egypt} {and} buy some {more} grain for us {and our families}." **3**But {his son} Judah replied to him, "The governor {there} sternly warned us that we cannot go to him {again} {to buy grain} if our {youngest} brother {is} not with us. **4**{So} if you will allow our {youngest} brother to go with us, {then} we can go {to Egypt} and buy {more} grain for you. **5**However if you refuse to let him go {with us}, we cannot go {there}, because the governor warned us that we cannot go to him {again} if our {youngest} brother {is} not with us."

6Then {their father} Israel asked {them}, "Why did you cause trouble for me by telling the governor that you have a younger brother?" **7**They answered {him}, "The governor asked {us} many questions about ourselves and about our family. He asked {us} if our father was still alive and if we had {another} brother. We {just} answered his questions honestly. There is no way we could have known that he would require us to take our brother down {there} {to him}!"

8Then Judah urged his father Israel {about Benjamin}, "Entrust the young man to me {to take care of} so that we can go immediately {to Egypt} {to buy grain}. Then all of us, including our children, can survive and not starve to

death. **9**I personally promise to keep him safe. You can hold me responsible for him, {so that} if I do not bring him {back} to you safely, I will be guilty of this sin against you for the rest of my life. **10**{In any case,} if we had not waited {this long}, we could have made two {round} trips {there and back} by now." **11**Then their father Israel said to them, "Since that is how it must be, then do this: Put {some} of the best things from {our} land in your sacks, and take {them} to the governor {as} gifts. {Include} some healing salve, some honey, {some} spices and incense, {and} {some} pistachio nuts and almonds. **12**{Also} take with you twice {as much} money {as you took the first time}, because you must take back the money that someone gave back {to you} in your sacks. Maybe they did that by mistake. **13**So {now,} take your {youngest} brother and immediately go back to the governor. **14**I pray that God {who is} all-powerful will cause him to treat you kindly so that he will let your other brother and Benjamin come {back} {home} with you. But {if not, and} if I {must} lose them and grieve {for them}, {then} I {will} grieve."

15Then the brothers packed those gifts {in their sacks} along with twice as much money {as the grain would cost}. Then they {took} Benjamin {with them} and quickly traveled down to {the country of} Egypt and went directly to Joseph. **16**When Joseph saw Benjamin with his {other} brothers, he commanded his head house-servant, "Escort these men to {my} house. Then butcher a calf and prepare {a feast}, because {I want} them to eat with me {today} at noon."

17The servant did exactly what Joseph {had} told {him to do} and escorted the brothers to Joseph's house. **18**But when the brothers {saw} that he had taken them to Joseph's house, they were afraid, and they said {to each other}, "He has taken us here because of {our} money that someone gave back to us in our sacks {on} {our} first trip {here}. {He intends} to {have his soldiers} attack us and overpower us and make us {his} servants, along with our donkeys!"

19Then they approached Joseph's head house-servant {outside} the door to {his} house to speak to him. **20**and said, "Excuse us, sir, one time before this, we traveled all the way down {here} {to Egypt} to buy {some} grain. **21**But {on our way home,} when we arrived at the place where we lodged for the night, we opened our sacks. There in the top of each of our sacks {was} the money {we had paid to you} {for the grain}! The money was all there! So we brought it {all} back with us {to give to you}. **22**We have {also} brought more money with us so that we can buy {some more} grain {now}. We have no idea who put the money in our sacks." **23**But Joseph's servant replied {to them}, "It is all right, {so} do not worry {about it}. The God whom you and your father serve must have put the money in your sacks, {because} I {definitely} received your money {that you paid for the grain}." Then Joseph's servant brought Simeon out {of prison} to his brothers.

24Then Joseph's servant brought the brothers into Joseph's house and provided {them} with water to wash {the road dust off} their feet. He also fed their donkeys. **25**{Meanwhile,} Joseph's brothers got {their} gifts ready to give to Joseph when he came home at noon, because they had heard that they were going to eat a meal {with him} there.

26When Joseph came home, his brothers {gave} to him the gifts that they had brought with them into the house, and they bowed down before him {with their faces} to the ground {to show respect}. **27**Then Joseph asked them how they were doing, and he asked {them}, "Is your elderly father well whom you mentioned {to me}? Is he still living?" **28**They answered {him}, "{Yes sir,} our father, who highly respects you, is still alive and well." Then they bowed {their heads} and bowed down {to the ground} {again}.

29Then Joseph looked around and saw his brother Benjamin, who had the same mother that he had, and he said {to them}, "So this must be your youngest brother whom you told me about." Then he said {to Benjamin}, "I pray that God will be kind to you, young man." **30**Suddenly Joseph rushed out {of the room} because he felt overwhelmed with emotions about his brother and was about to cry. So he went to his bedroom, where he cried {privately}.

31After he had gotten control of his emotions {and stopped crying}, he washed {the tears off} his face and came back out {of his room}. Then he commanded {his servants}, "Serve the food {to us}." **32**So they served {food} to Joseph at his own table, and his brothers at their own table, and the Egyptians who were eating with him at their own table. Egyptians do not eat at the same table as Hebrew people, because Egyptians consider it unacceptable

{to do that}. **33**Joseph's brothers were sitting {at a table} facing his table in the order of their ages, from the oldest to the youngest. {When they noticed that,} they were amazed {and stared} at one another. **34**Then Joseph {had his servants} serve food to his brothers from his table, but he {had them} serve Benjamin five times more {food} than {they} served to any of the rest {of his brothers}. Then his brothers feasted and drank {wine} freely with him.

Chapter 44

Joseph Tests His Brothers

1Later Joseph ordered his head house-servant, "Fill the men's {grain} bags with as much grain as they can take {with them}, and in the top of their bags, put the money that each {of them} paid {for the grain}. **2**Also put my silver cup in the top of the youngest {one}'s bag, along with the money that he paid for the grain." So the servant did exactly what Joseph had ordered {him to do}.

3Early the next morning, {Joseph} sent the brothers {on their way}, along with their donkeys. **4**{But} they had not gone very far out of the city when he ordered his head servant, "Hurry {and} pursue those men. When you catch up with them, ask them, 'Why have you treated {my master} so badly {after he was} so good {to you}? **5**The cup {you stole} is {the cup} that my master drinks from. He {also} uses it to find out secret things! What you have done is {very} wrong!'"

6Then the servant {left, and when he} caught up with the men, he repeated to them what Joseph had told him {to say}. **7**But they replied, "Sir, why do you say such things? {We assure you,} sir, {that} we would never do anything like that! **8**Remember that we returned to you the money that we discovered in our {grain} bags {last time}. {We brought it} {all the way} from {our home in} the region of Canaan! So we would never steal silver {things} or gold {things} {or anything else} from your master's house! **9**{In fact,} sir, if you find that one of us does have the cup, then {you may} execute that person, and {the rest of} us, sir, will become your slaves."

10Joseph's servant replied {to them}, "Okay then, I will do as you suggest {except for this}: The one whom I find with my master's cup {is the only one who} will become my slave. {The rest of} you will be innocent {and free to go}." **11**So each of the brothers quickly took his {grain} bag {off his donkey} and put it on the ground, and each of them opened his {own} bag. **12**Then Joseph's servant searched {their bags}. He started with the oldest {brother} and continued until he came to the youngest {brother}, and {there} he found the cup in Benjamin's bag! **13**In response {to that}, the brothers tore their clothes {in distress}. Then each {of them} put his bag {back} on his {own} donkey, and they {all} {turned around and} went back to the city.

14When Judah and his brothers arrived at Joseph's house, Joseph was there {waiting for them}. So they prostrated themselves on the ground before him {to show respect}. **15**Then Joseph exclaimed to them, "What you have done is terrible! You should have known that someone in my position knows how to discover the secret things {that people do}!" **16**Judah replied {to him}, "Sir, there is nothing {convincing} that we can say {to you}. There is no way that we can explain {this}. There is no way we can prove {to you} that we are innocent. God is punishing us for our {past} sin. {So now,} sir, we are {all} here to be your slaves, including {the one} whom {your house-servant} found with your cup {in his bag}." **17**But Joseph told {them}, "{No,} I would never {even} consider doing such a thing! {Rather} {only} the man whom {my servant} found with my cup {in his bag} will be my slave. {The rest of} you are free to go {back} home to your father."

Judah Begs Joseph to Set Benjamin Free

18Then Judah approached Joseph and said {to him}, "Please, sir, I humbly ask you to let me speak freely to you. Please do not be angry with me, {especially} since you {are} as {powerful as} {King} Pharaoh {himself}. **19**Sir, {previously} you asked us if our father was {still} alive and if we had {any other} brothers. **20**And we told you, sir, {that} we have an elderly father and {also} a younger brother who was born when our father was {already} old.

That brother's mother only had one other son, who is now dead. So our father {especially} loves our youngest brother.

21"Then you told us, sir, to bring our youngest brother {here} to you, so that you could see him for yourself. **22**But we told you, sir, that the young man should not leave his father {and come here}, because if he did, his father would die {from anxiety}. **23**But then, sir, you told us {that} unless our youngest brother came with us, we could never see you again.

24"When we returned {home} to our father, who highly respects you, we reported to him what you told {us}. **25**{Months} later our father told {us}, 'Go back {to Egypt} {and} buy some {more} grain for us.' **26**But we replied {to him}, 'We cannot go {there} unless our youngest brother is with us. Then we can go. The governor {who sells grain there} will not allow us to see him {again} if our youngest brother is not with us.' **27**Then our father said to us, 'As you know, my wife {Rachel} and I {only} had two {sons} together. **28**One {of her sons} left here {one day}, and I have not seen him since then. I am sure that {a wild animal} must have {killed him and} torn him apart. **29**So if you also take her other son {away} from me, and anything harms him, you will cause me, your gray-haired father, so much grief that I will {die and} go down to the afterworld.

30"So now, {sir,} if we go {home} to our father without his youngest son, since our father's life depends on his son's life, **31**if he sees that his son is gone, he will die! {Yes,} we will cause our gray-haired father so much grief that he will {die and} go to the afterworld! **32**Besides that, sir, I promised my father that I would return his son to him safely. I told {him} that if I did not bring his son {back} to him, I would be guilty of sinning against him forever.

33"So then, sir, I beg you to let me stay {here} and be your slave in place of our youngest {brother}, and let him go back {home} with his {other} brothers. **34**There is no way I can go back to my father if his youngest {son} is not with me! I could not bear to see how terribly my father would suffer!"

Chapter 45

Joseph Reveals Who He Is to His Brothers

1{When Joseph heard that,} he could no {longer} keep himself from crying in front of all his servants, so he shouted {to them}, "All of you leave my presence!" {Immediately the servants left the room,} so that no one else was with Joseph when he told his brothers who he was. **2**But he started crying so loudly that {many} Egyptians heard {him}, including Pharaoh's family. **3**Then he exclaimed to his brothers {in their language}, "I {am} {your brother} Joseph! Is my father still alive?" But Joseph's brothers could not reply to him, because they felt very afraid to be standing in front of him.

4So Joseph said to them, "Please come here next to me." After they went closer {to him}, he said {to them}, "I {really am} your brother Joseph, whom you sold {to be a slave} in {the country of} Egypt. **5**But now, do not be upset or angry with yourselves for selling me, because {it was actually} God {who} sent me {here} before you came, to save {many people's} lives. **6**For two years {now} {there has been} a famine throughout this region, and for another five years {it will be so severe that} no one will {be able to} plant {seeds} or harvest {crops}. **7**That is why God sent me {here} before you came, to save your lives in this amazing way so that you will survive and have descendants on the earth. **8**So then, you {were} not {the ones} {who} caused me to come here, but {rather} {it was} God {who sent me}. He has {also} made me {like a} father to {King} Pharaoh, so that I am the one in charge of his entire household and {also} the governor over the entire country of Egypt.

9"Hurry back to our father and tell him that his son Joseph has sent him this message: 'God has appointed me governor over the entire {country of} Egypt. {So} {please} come down {here} {to live} near me, {and} do not delay. **10**You can live in Goshen Province. That way you will live close to me with your children and your grandchildren, along with your flocks {of sheep and goats}, your herds {of cattle} and everything {else} that you own. **11**I will take

care of you there, since the famine will last five {more} years. {Please come} so that {the famine} will not cause you and your family to lose everything you own {and die}.'"

12{Then Joseph said to his brothers,} "Look! {All of} you, including my brother Benjamin, {can} see that {it really is} me, {Joseph,} who is talking to you. **13**So {go and} tell our father all {about} how powerful I am in Egypt and {about} everything {else} that you have seen {here}. Then quickly bring him down here {to me}."

14Then Joseph hugged his brother Benjamin {tightly} and cried {for joy}, and Benjamin {also} cried as he hugged Joseph. **15**Then Joseph kissed all his brothers {on their cheeks} as he continued to cry {for joy}. After {he did} that, his brothers started talking with him.

16When Pharaoh's household heard the news that Joseph's brothers had come {there}, Pharaoh and {all} his servants were happy. **17**So Pharaoh told Joseph, "Give your brothers this message {from me}: 'Load your donkeys {with grain} and go quickly {back} to Canaan. **18**Then bring your father and your families {back} {here} to me. I will give you the best {area} in the country of Egypt {to live in}, so that you will live well with the best of everything in the country.'

19{Then Pharaoh said to Joseph,} "I also want you {to tell them} to take {some of} {my} wagons with them from the country of Egypt for their wives and {young} children {to travel in}. Then {tell them} to bring their father {back} {here to live}. **20**They should not worry about {leaving some of} their belongings {behind}, because the best {things} in all the country of Egypt {will be} theirs."

21So Israel's sons {agreed to} do that. Then Joseph gave them wagons {to use} as {King} Pharaoh had commanded, and he supplied them with food to eat as they traveled {home}. **22**He {also} gave a {new} set of clothes to each one of his brothers, but to Benjamin he gave five {new} sets of clothes and 300 {pieces} of silver {money}. **23**He also gave {them} the following gifts to give to his father: ten male donkeys that were carrying {some of} the best {things} from Egypt, and ten female donkeys that were carrying grain, bread, and {other} food for him {and his family} to eat as they traveled {to Egypt}. **24**Then Joseph sent his brothers off {on their way home}. As they were leaving, he told them, "Do not argue {with each other} on the way."

25Then Joseph's brothers left Egypt and traveled {home} to their father Jacob in the region of Canaan. **26**{When they arrived,} they announced to him, "Joseph {is} still alive! In fact, he {is} the governor over the entire country of Egypt!" {When their father heard that news,} he was stunned {and silent}, because he could not believe them. **27**But {after} they told him everything that Joseph had said to them, and {after} he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him {and his family} {to Egypt}, he recovered {from the shock}. **28**Then he exclaimed {to them}, "{That's} enough! {It must be true!} My son Joseph really is alive! I must go {now} and see him {again} before I die."

Chapter 46

Jacob and His Family Move to {the Country of} Egypt

1So Israel {and his family} started traveling {toward Egypt} with all their belongings. When they reached {the city of} Beersheba, he offered some of his animals {on an altar} {there} as sacrifices to God, whom his father Isaac had worshiped. **2**During the night God called to Israel in a vision, "Jacob! Jacob!" Jacob replied, "Yes, {Lord}?" **3**Then God said {to him}, "I {am} God, the God whom your father worshiped. Don't be afraid of moving down to {the country of} Egypt, because I will make your descendants {multiply and} become a large people group {while they live} there. **4**I will personally go with you down to Egypt {and take care of you there}. Later I will definitely bring your descendants {back} {here to Canaan}. When you die, Joseph will be with you."

5After that, Jacob left {the city of} Beersheba, and his sons took him and their wives and children in the wagons that {King} Pharaoh had provided for them to ride in {to Egypt}. **6**They {also} brought {with them} their livestock and their {other} belongings that they had gotten in the region of Canaan. Then Jacob and all of his descendants

arrived in Egypt. **7**He brought his entire {extended} family with him to Egypt, {including} his sons and daughters, {and} his grandsons and granddaughters.

8Here is a list of the names of Israel's descendants who came {with him} to Egypt, {that is, the names of} Jacob's descendants: Reuben, {who was} his oldest {son}, **9**and Reuben's sons, {who were} Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. **10**{Simeon and} Simeon's sons, {who were} Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jakin, Zohar, and Shaul, who had a Canaanite mother. **11**{Levi and} Levi's sons, {who were} Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. **12**{Judah and} Judah's sons, {who were} Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah; actually, Er and Onan had {already} died in the region of Canaan. Perez's sons were Hezron and Hamul. **13**{Issachar and} Issachar's sons, {who were} Tola, Puvah, Job, and Shimron. **14**{Zebulun and} Zebulun's sons, {who were} Sered, Elon, and Jahleel. **15**Those {were} the sons {and grandsons} whom Jacob and {his wife} Leah had together in {the region of} Paddan Aram. {They} also {had} a daughter {named} Dinah. The total number of those descendants {was} thirty-three.

16{Jacob's other descendants who came with him included} {his son Gad and} Gad's sons, {who were} Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli. **17**{He also took} {his son Asher and} Asher's sons, {who were} Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, and Beriah, and their sister Serah. Beriah's sons {were} Heber and Malkiel. **18**Those {were} the children {and grandchildren} {that Jacob had} with Zilpah, {who was the servant woman} that Laban had given to his daughter Leah. {Those descendants that} Zilpah and Jacob had together {totaled} sixteen persons.

19The sons that Jacob had with his wife Rachel {were} Joseph and Benjamin. **20**Joseph's {sons} who were born in {the country of} Egypt {were} Manasseh and Ephraim. Their mother was {Joseph's wife} Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, {who was} the priest at {the city of} On. **21**Benjamin's sons {were} Bela, Beker, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard. **22**Those {were} the sons {and grandsons} whom Jacob and {his wife} Rachel had together, a total of fourteen descendants.

23{Other descendants who came with Jacob included:} {his son Dan and} Dan's son Hushim. **24**{Naphtali and} Naphtali's sons, {who were} Jahziel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem. **25**Those {were all} the sons {and grandsons} that Jacob had with Bilhah, {the servant woman} whom Laban had given to his daughter Rachel. The total number of those descendants {was} seven.

26Altogether Jacob had sixty-six blood relatives who went with him to Egypt. That {number} does not include {his wives or} his sons' wives. **27**{If you include} {Jacob, Joseph, and} Joseph's two sons, who were born in Egypt, {then} there was a total of seventy members of Jacob's family in Egypt.

Jacob Reunites with His Son Joseph and Meets {King} Pharaoh

28{When they reached Egypt,} Jacob had Judah go to Joseph ahead of them to get directions {from him} to Goshen {Province}. After that, Jacob's family traveled to Goshen. **29**Then Joseph got his chariot ready and went to Goshen to meet his father Israel. {There} Joseph greeted his father and hugged him {tightly} and cried {for joy} on his shoulder {for} a long time. **30**Then Israel exclaimed to Joseph, "Now when I die {I will be at peace}, because I have seen you in person {and know} that you are still alive!"

31Then Joseph announced to his brothers and {the rest of} his father's family, "I will go to {King} Pharaoh and inform him, 'My brothers and {the rest of} my father's family have traveled {here} from the region of Canaan to live near me. **32**The men {of my family} raise sheep {and goats}. In fact, they raise {all kinds of} livestock {for a living}, and they have brought {with them} {all} their sheep {and goats} and cattle, and everything {else} that they own.' **33**So then, when the king summons you and asks {you} what your occupation is, **34**you should tell {him}, 'Sir, ever since the time we were young until now, we have been raising livestock, {which is} the same occupation that our ancestors had.' That way {he will allow} you to live {separately} in Goshen Province, {especially} since Egyptians despise everyone who raises sheep."

Chapter 47

1So Joseph went to {King} Pharaoh and informed {him}, “My father and my brothers {and their families} have come {to Egypt} from the region of Canaan and {are} now in Goshen Province. {They brought with them} their sheep, {goats,} cattle, and everything {else} that they own.” **2**Then Joseph brought five of his brothers before Pharaoh and introduced them {to him}. **3**Then Pharaoh asked them, “What {is} your occupation?” They answered him, “Your Majesty, we raise sheep {for a living}, just like our ancestors did.” **4**They {also} said to him, “We have come {here} to live for a while in {your} country. The famine is so severe In the region of Canaan {where we come from} that there is not enough grass {in the fields} for our flocks. So then, sir, please let us live in Goshen Province.”

5Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “{Now that} your father and brothers have come {to live} near you, **6**you may choose any part of the land of Egypt {for them to live in}. {In fact,} they may live in the best land {in the country}, in Goshen Province. And if you know that some of them are especially talented {at raising livestock}, then put them in charge of raising my livestock {also}.”

7Then Joseph took his father Jacob and introduced him to {King} Pharaoh, and Jacob {asked God to} bless Pharaoh. **8**Then Pharaoh asked Jacob, “{Sir,} how old are you now?” **9**Jacob answered him, “I have been living {in this world} for 130 years. My life has been short, with many hardships. In fact, I have not lived {nearly} as long as my ancestors did during their time on earth.” **10**Then Jacob {again} {asked God to} bless Pharaoh and left him.

11After that, Joseph did what Pharaoh had told him {to do}: He helped his father and brothers settle in the country of Egypt. He gave them the choicest property {in Egypt}, which was in {Goshen Province, also known as} Rameses Province. **12**Joseph {also} provided his father and brothers and all {the rest of} his father’s family {with} as much food as {each family} needed to feed {all} the people in their family.

How Joseph Ruled Egypt During the Rest of the Famine

13Now {after a while,} the famine became so severe in the entire world that there was very little food {available} {anywhere}. {The people of} the country of Egypt and the region of Canaan were suffering badly because they did not have enough to eat. **14**So they bought grain from Joseph until there was no more money left in the country of Egypt or the region of Canaan. Joseph {had his servants} take the money to Pharaoh’s palace. **15**When {the people in} Egypt and Canaan had spent all their money, {people from} all over Egypt went to Joseph and begged {him}, “{Sir,} we have no more money! Please give us food so that we do not starve to death!” **16**Joseph responded, “Since your money is gone, bring {me} your livestock to pay for the food that I will give you.” **17**So the people brought their livestock to Joseph. They gave him {their} horses, sheep, goats, cattle, and donkeys to pay for the food that he gave them. In that way Joseph supplied the people with food that year, {and they gave him} all their livestock {to pay} for it.

18After that year was over, the people went to Joseph {again} in the following year and pleaded with him, “Sir, as you know, {our} money is gone and {all} {our} livestock {belong} to you. The only way we can pay you {for food} is to give you our farmland and work for you, sir. **19**Please do not {just} watch us die or let our land {become wasteland}. {Instead,} {please} take us and our land {in exchange} for food. Then we will be {King} Pharaoh’s slaves, and our land {will also be his}. {Please} give {us} seeds {to plant} so that we can stay alive and not {starve} to death, and {so that} the land will not become a desert!”

20So Joseph {agreed and} acquired all the land in {the country of} Egypt for Pharaoh. All the Egyptians sold their fields {to him} {in exchange for food}, because the food shortage was {so} severe. In that way, {all} the land became Pharaoh’s {property}. **21**Joseph {also} relocated the people to the cities throughout the entire {country of} Egypt. **22**The only land that he did not buy was the priests’ {land}, because they regularly received a certain amount {of food} from Pharaoh, and they had enough to eat from what he gave to them. That is why they did not {need to} sell their land {to buy food}.

23Next Joseph announced to the {Egyptian} people, “Listen, now that you and your farmland belong to {King} Pharaoh, here {are} {some} seeds for you so that you can plant {them in} the fields. **24**Then every harvest season, you must give him one-fifth {of the crops you harvest}. The rest {of what you harvest} will be yours {to use} to plant {in} the fields and as food for you and your families, including your children.” **25**The people replied {to him}, “You have saved our lives! Please {continue to} be kind to us, sir, and we will {agree to} be {King} Pharaoh’s servants.” **26**So Joseph made a law {that required} {people to give} to Pharaoh one-fifth {of all the crops they harvested} from the fields in Egypt. {That law} is still {in effect} today. The priests’ land was the only {land} {in Egypt} that did not belong to Pharaoh.

Jacob Asks His Son Joseph to Bury His Body in the Land of Canaan

27Now {Jacob, whose other name was} Israel, was living {with his family} in Goshen Province in the country of Egypt, and they acquired {many possessions} there. They had many children and became very numerous. **28**{After} Jacob had lived in the country of Egypt {for} seventeen years, he was 147 years old. **29**{When} it was almost time for him to die, he summoned his son Joseph and urged him, “Please do this favor for me: Put your hand under my leg, and {promise me that} {after I die,} you will be kind and faithful to me. Please {promise that} you will not bury my body {here} in {the country of} Egypt. **30**Rather, after I die and join my ancestors {who have died}, take my body out of Egypt {to the region of Canaan} and bury it in the same burial place where their bodies are.” Joseph promised {him}, “I will do what you requested.” **31**But his father insisted, “Vow to me {before God} {that you will do it}.” So Joseph vowed {that he would do it}. Then {his father} Israel bowed {down} {to worship God} beside {his} bed.

Chapter 48

Jacob Blesses Joseph’s Sons Ephraim and Manasseh

1{Some time} after those things happened, {someone} told Joseph, “Listen, your father is sick.” So Joseph {went to visit his father and} took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim with him. **2**{When they got there,} someone informed Jacob, “Look, your son Joseph has come to visit you.” {Immediately} Israel exerted himself and sat up at {the head of} {his} bed {and they greeted each other}. **3**Then Jacob told Joseph, “God {who is} all-powerful appeared to me {long ago} in the region of Canaan at {the town of} Luz. He blessed me {there} **4**by saying to me, ‘Listen, I will give you many descendants who will increase {in number} and become many people groups. I will {also} give this land to your descendants to own forever.’”

5{Then Jacob said to Joseph,} “Now then, your two sons Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you {here} in the country of Egypt before I joined you here, {I will treat as} my sons, just like my sons Reuben and Simeon. **6**If you have any more children, they will be yours, {so that} what they inherit {from me} will be some of what their brothers {Ephraim and Manasseh} inherit {from me}. **7**I {am doing this because} as our family was returning {home} from {the region of} Paddan {Aram}, {your mother} Rachel died beside me in the region of Canaan while we were still traveling and some distance away from {the town of} Ephrath. {As you know,} I buried her body there by the road that goes to Ephrath, which {now has the name} Bethlehem.”

8Then Israel noticed Joseph’s {two} sons and asked {him}, “Who {are} these {young men}?” **9**Joseph answered him, “These {are} my sons whom God gave to me here {in Egypt}.” Then Israel said {to Joseph}, “Please bring them {closer} to me so that I can {ask God to} bless them.” **10**Now Israel was almost blind because of old age, {so that} he could not see {very clearly}. So Joseph took his sons {closer} to his father, and his father kissed them {on the cheeks} and hugged them. **11**Then Israel exclaimed to Joseph, “I never thought I would see you {again}, but {now} look, God has even let me meet your children!” **12**Then Joseph had his sons move away from beside his father’s knees, and he bowed {before his father} and touched the ground with his forehead {to show him respect}.

13Then he brought his sons close to his father {again}. He had Ephraim stand in front of Israel’s left {side}, and he had Manasseh stand in front of Israel’s right {side}. **14**But Israel {intentionally} reached out his right hand and put

{it} on Ephraim's head, even though Ephraim {was} {Joseph's} younger {son}. Then he crossed his arms and {put} his left hand on Manasseh's head, {even} though Manasseh {was} {Joseph's} oldest {son}. **15**Then Israel blessed Joseph {and his sons} by saying,

"I pray that the God whom my ancestors Abraham and Isaac served {will bless your sons}.

He is the God who has taken care of me my entire life.

16{He is also} the Angel who saved me {continually} from every harm.

I pray that he will cause {these} young men to prosper {greatly},

so that my family line and the family line of my ancestors Abraham and Isaac will continue through them

and so that they will have many descendants on the earth."

17{When} Joseph noticed that his father had put his right hand on Ephraim's head, he thought it was a mistake. So he took hold of his father's hand {in order} to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. **18**Then he said to his father, "That is the wrong son, Father. The other {one} {is} {my} oldest son. {So} {you need to} have your right hand on his head." **19**But his father would not {move his hands} and replied, "I know {it}, my son, I know {what I am doing}. {In fact,} your oldest son will also be a great man, and he will become {the ancestor of} a people group. However, his younger brother will be {even} greater than he {will be}, and his {younger} brother's descendants will become many people groups." **20**So Israel blessed Ephraim and Manasseh that day by saying {to them},

"{The people of} Israel will use your names when they bless {people} and say,

'May God prosper you like {he prospered} Ephraim and Manasseh.'"

In that way, Israel made Ephraim greater than Manasseh.

21After that, Israel {turned} to Joseph {and} said {to him}, "As you can see, I am about to die, but God will {always} be with you and your brothers {and all your descendants} {to help you}. He will also take you back to the land that {he gave} to your ancestors. **22**Besides that, {as part of your inheritance from me,} I {hereby} give you {the city of} Shechem, {which} I captured from the Amorite{s} when I defeated them in battle. This is more {land} than I am giving to your brothers."

Chapter 49

Jacob's Last Words to His Twelve Sons

1Then Jacob summoned {all} his sons. He said {to them}, "Come together {here}, so that I can tell you what will happen to you {and your descendants} in the years ahead.

2My sons, gather around {me,} {your father} Jacob, and listen {to me}.

{I,} your father Israel, have something {important} to tell you.

3"Reuben, you {are} my oldest {son},

{the result of} my strength and the first child I had as a young man.

{You had} high status and great authority {in our family}.

4{However,} {you are} unstable like {rushing} water, {so} you will no longer have your important status {in our family},

because you got {into} my bed {with my concubine}

{and} dishonored me! You {actually} climbed {into} my couch!

5"Simeon and Levi, {you are} partners.

You use your swords to do violent things {together}.

6I will never participate with you when you plan {evil} things!

I refuse to make {evil} plans with you,

because you became angry and murdered {many} people,

and {just} to entertain yourselves you crippled {some} cattle.

7May God curse you for being so fiercely angry

and malicious!

I {ask God to} scatter you {and your descendants} among {the descendants of} Jacob.

That's right, I {ask him to} scatter you throughout {the land of} Israel.

8"Judah, your brothers {and their descendants} will {highly} praise you {and your descendants}.

You will conquer your enemies.

{Then} my {other} sons will prostrate themselves before you {and your descendants} {in respect}.

9Judah, my son, {you are} {powerful} {like} a young lion

that has returned {to its den} after {killing} {its} prey.

It stretches out {and} lies down {to sleep}.

No one dares to disturb that lion.

10Judah, there will always be one of your descendants ruling as king.

In fact, your descendants will rule

until the {highest} king comes

and the peoples {of the earth} obey him.

11You {and your descendants} will {be so wealthy that you could} tie your donkey{s} to {your} {grape}vine{s} {to eat the valuable fruit}.

{It will not matter if} your donkeys' colts eat {your} best {grapevine} branch{es}.

{You will still have so much wine from other vines

that} you could {even} use it like water to wash your clothes.

12{Your} eyes {will be} bright from {drinking} {abundant} wine,

and {your} teeth {will be} white from {drinking} {abundant} milk.

13“Zebulun, {you} {and your descendants} will live near the coast,
where there will be a {safe} harbor for ships.
Your territory {will extend} as far {north} as {the city of} Sidon.

14“Issachar, {you} {and your descendants} {will be} {like} a sturdy donkey
{that is} resting {on the ground} between two loads.
15You will have a good place to rest,
in a land that is pleasant,
but you will work hard and carry {heavy loads}.
You will have to work {very} hard {for others} as slaves.

16“Dan, you {and your descendants} will rule your {own} people group
and have equal status with {the rest of} the tribes of Israel.
17You will be {like} a poisonous snake
{lying} beside a road
that strikes the feet of {its enemy’s} horse,
so that {it rears up and} the enemy falls off backward {to the ground}.”

18{Then Jacob paused and exclaimed,} “Yahweh, I am looking expectantly to you to save {me}!”

19{Then he continued,} “{As for you,} Gad, a group of robbers will attack you {and your descendants},
but you will chase them {and defeat them}.

20“Asher, {you} {and your descendants} will {be wealthy and} eat the best food.
In fact, you will produce delicious foods {that are fit} for kings {to eat}.

21“Naphtali, {you} {and your descendants} {will be} {swift} {like} a deer that is free to run wherever it wants.
You will {also} speak eloquently.

22“Joseph, {you} {and your descendants} {will become} very numerous {like} {fruit on} a productive {tree}

{that is growing} next to a stream {of water},

{with} branches {full of fruit} that hang over a {nearby} wall.

23Enemy warriors will {fiercely} attack you {and your descendants}

and shoot {arrows} {at you} and try to destroy you.

24But the Mighty {God} whom I worship will keep you strong

and help you use your weapons well {as you fight back}.

He takes care of {his people} the way a shepherd takes care of his sheep.

{He is} {like} a rock {fortress} who protects Israel {and his descendants}.

25{That strength/power comes} from the God {who has always taken care} of {me,} your father.

He is the all-powerful {God} who will help you {and your descendants}

and bless you {all} {with} rain from above

and water from deep in the ground.

He will {also} bless {you} with many children {and much livestock}.

26{God} has blessed me more

than he blessed my ancestors.

{He has blessed me with riches that are} greater than the riches {that come} from the ancient mountains.

I pray that {God} will abundantly bless {you too,} Joseph,

as the one he chose to set apart {and honor} above your brothers.

27"Benjamin {you and your descendants} {will be} {like} a fierce wolf.

You will always defeat your enemies

and take their possessions and wealth."

28Those {twelve sons} {are} {the ancestors of} the twelve tribes that descended from Israel, and those {were} the blessings that their father spoke to them. He blessed each one of them with blessings that were appropriate for them {and their descendants}.

Jacob Dies and Is Buried

29Then Jacob instructed his sons by saying to them, "I am about to {die and} join my ancestors {who have already died}. Bury my body next to their {bodies} inside the cave that {is} in the field that Ephron the Hittite used to own. **30**That cave and field are in the Machpelah {area} that is near {the city of} Mamre in the region of Canaan. {That is the cave} that {my grandfather} Abraham bought, along with the field, from Ephron the Hittite, in order to have a place to bury {his dead relatives}. **31**That is where {the bodies of} Abraham and his wife Sarah are buried, {and} where {the bodies of} Isaac and his wife Rebekah are buried, and that is where I buried {the body of} {my wife} Leah. **32**{Abraham} bought that field and cave from the Hittites." **33**When Jacob had finished giving those instructions to his sons, he {lay down and} pulled his feet {up} into {his} bed. Then he took his last breath {and died} and joined his ancestors {who had died before him}.

Chapter 50

1Then Joseph hugged his father {in sorrow}, and he cried over him and kissed him {goodbye} {on the cheek}. **2**Then he ordered his doctors who served him to prepare his father{'s body} for burial. So they did that. **3**The process took forty days, which is how long it {normally} takes to prepare a body. The people in Egypt mourned for Israel {for} seventy days.

4After that time of mourning Israel's death, Joseph said to Pharaoh's officials, "Please do this favor for me: please take a message to {King} Pharaoh {for me} and tell {him} **5**that when my father was about to die, he had me vow to him that I would bury his body in the region of Canaan, in a tomb that he had prepared for himself there. So {ask the king to} please let me go {to Canaan} and bury my father{'s body} {there}. After that, I will come back {here}."
6{When Pharaoh heard Joseph's message,} he replied, "{Tell Joseph that} he may go {to Canaan} and bury his father{'s body} just as his father made him vow {that he would do}."

7So Joseph started the trip {to Canaan} to bury his father{'s body}, and all Pharaoh's officials escorted him, {including} the important leaders from Pharaoh's court and all the {other} important leaders in the country of Egypt. **8**All of Joseph's family also {went with him,} including his brothers and {the rest of} his father's family. They only left {behind} their children and their livestock in Goshen Province. **9**{Many} soldiers also escorted Joseph, {including} those {who were} riding chariots and those {who were} riding horses, so that the {entire} group was very large.

10They traveled to the other side of the Jordan {River} and stopped at a {grain} threshing place owned by {a man named} Atad. There Joseph {and the others} mourned for his father very loudly and sorrowfully for seven days.
11When the Canaanites who lived in the area saw them mourning {like that} at Atad's threshing place, they exclaimed {to each other}, "{Wow!} Those people from Egypt are mourning {very} sorrowfully {for someone who died}!" That is why the name of that place on the other side of the Jordan {River} is Abel Mizraim, {which means "Egyptians' mourning place."}

12Jacob's sons did {everything} for him just as he had instructed them {to do}: **13**They took his body to the region of Canaan and buried it in the cave {that is} in the field in the Machpelah {area}, near {the city of} Mamre. {It was} the field {and cave} that Abraham had bought from Ephron the Hittite as a place to bury his dead {relatives}. **14**After Joseph buried his father{'s body}, he returned to {the country of} Egypt, along with his brothers and everyone {else} who had accompanied him to his father's funeral.

Joseph Reassures His Brothers That He Has Forgiven Them

15Now that their father was no longer alive, Joseph's brothers {were worried and} said {to each other},"If Joseph is angry at us for the terrible way that we treated him, he might punish us severely for what we did." **16**So they sent {a messenger} to Joseph to tell {him}, "Before our father died, he told {us} **17**to ask you to please forgive {us}, your brothers, for sinning {against you} and treating you so badly. So then, as servants of God whom our father worshiped, we beg you to forgive us for sinning {against you}." When Joseph heard his brothers' message to him, he {was very sad and} cried. **18**Then his brothers came {to him}, prostrated themselves before him {to show respect}, and said {to him}, "Here we are, we {will be} your servants!" **19**But Joseph replied to them, "You do not need to be afraid. After all, I am not God! {So I have no right to punish you.} **20**{It is true that} you planned to harm me, {but} God is using that to benefit {us all}. Right now he is doing what he planned, to keep many people from dying. **21**So then, you do not need to be afraid. I {myself} will provide {everything} that you and your children need." In that way, Joseph assured them {that he had forgiven them}, and he {also} said {other} things to encourage them.

Joseph Dies in Egypt

22Joseph continued to live in {the country of} Egypt, along with {the rest of} his father {Jacob}'s family, until he was
110 years old. **23**He lived {long enough} to see {his son} Ephraim's children, grandchildren, and great-
grandchildren. The children of {his grandson} Machir, {who was} Manasseh's son, also grew up during his lifetime.

24Then {one day} Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will definitely help you and take you {and
your descendants} from this country to the land that he vowed {to give} to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. **25**When God
does that, you must take my body back {to Canaan} {with you} {and bury it there}." Then Joseph had {his brothers
and} {the rest of} the descendants of Israel vow {that they would do that}.

26So Joseph died at the age of 110 years. Then his doctors prepared his body for burial, and they put it in a burial
box in {the country of} Egypt.

Exodus

Chapter 1

1These are the names of Israel's sons who went into Egypt with Jacob and their families: **2**Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, **3**Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin, **4**Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. **5**{At that time}, Jacob had 70 total descendants (including Joseph {and his sons} who were already in Egypt.) **6**{After some time,} Joseph and his brothers and everyone else in their family who lived at that time died. **7**{Jacob's} descendants gave birth to many children. The number of his descendants grew, and they became extremely strong. {As a result, there were so many of them that} they were everywhere in Egypt.

8{However, sometime later,} a new king began to rule in Egypt. He did not know about {all the good things} Joseph {had done for the people of Egypt}. **9**He said to his people, "Look {at what has happened}! There are so many Israelites that they outnumber us Egyptians! **10**We must find a way to control them! If we do not do that, there will be more of them. Then, if enemies attack us, the Israelites will join with our enemies and fight against us, and they will escape from our land." **11**So the king and his officials put masters over groups of Israelite workers to cause them to suffer very much by making them work very hard. So the Israelites built the cities Pithom and Rameses to store goods for the king. **12**But the more the Egyptians treated the Israelites badly, the more the Israelites had children, and the more they spread throughout Egypt. Therefore, the Egyptians were distressed because of the Israelites. **13**The Egyptians ruthlessly made the Israelites work **14**and made their lives miserable by forcing them to work hard. The Israelites built with bricks and mortar and did all sorts of agricultural work. The Egyptians ruthlessly gave them all sorts of work.

15Now there were two Hebrew midwives named Shiphrah and Puah. The king of Egypt said to them, **16**"When you help a Hebrew woman have a baby, pay attention right as the baby is born. If the baby is a boy, you must kill him. If the baby is a girl, you may let her live." **17**But the midwives were afraid {to disobey} God. So they did not obey what the king told them to do. They allowed the baby boys to live. **18**So the king summoned the two midwives and asked them, "Why are you doing this? Why are you letting the baby boys live?"

19One of the midwives replied to the king, "{We have not been able to obey you} because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women. Because they are energetic, the Hebrew women have their babies before we arrive to help them."

20Therefore, the {Hebrew} people became numerous and very strong. God acted kindly to the midwives **21**because they were afraid {to disobey} him. He gave them each a husband and children.

22Then the king ordered all the Egyptian people, "Throw every {Hebrew} baby boy that is born into the Nile River! However, you can allow the baby girls to live."

Chapter 2

1Now there was a man who was a descendant of Jacob's son Levi. He married a woman who was also a descendant of Levi. **2**She became pregnant and had a baby boy. When she saw that he was a healthy baby, she {wanted to keep him alive, so she} hid him for three months. **3**When she was unable to hide him any longer, she got a basket made from tall reeds. She covered the basket with tar {so it would float in water}. Then she put the baby in the basket and put the basket in the water. It was at the edge of the Nile River, in the middle of the tall reeds. **4**His {older} sister hid nearby so she could find out what would happen to him.

5Soon the king's daughter went down to the river to take a bath. Her female servants walked along the riverbank. She saw the basket in the tall reeds in the river, so she sent one of her servants to get it. {When the servant brought it back,} the king's daughter took it from her **6**and she opened it and was surprised to see a baby inside that was crying. She pitied him and said, "This must be a Hebrew baby."

7Then the baby's {older} sister {walked up} to the king's daughter and said, "Do you want me to go and find a Hebrew woman who will be able to nurse the baby for you?"

8The king's daughter said to her, "Yes, go and find one." So the girl went and found the baby's mother {and brought her to the king's daughter}. **9**The king's daughter said to the mother, "Please take this baby and nurse him for me. I will pay you for doing that." So the baby's mother {agreed,} took him, and nursed him. **10**When he had gotten bigger, his mother brought the boy to the king's daughter. She adopted him and said, "I pulled him out of the water, so I will call him Moses."

11One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out {of the palace area} to see the hard work his people had to do. He also saw an Egyptian beating one of his people, the Hebrews. **12**He looked around {to see if anyone was watching}. Seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian man and buried his body in the sand. **13**The next day he was out again. He was surprised to see two Hebrew men fighting each other. He said to the man who started the fight, "Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?"

14The man replied, "No one put you in charge of judging us! Do not think you {will get away with} killing me like you killed that Egyptian yesterday!"

Then Moses was afraid, because he thought, "Everyone knows what I did." **15**When the king heard that Moses killed an Egyptian, he ordered {his soldiers} to kill Moses. But Moses ran away from the king {and left Egypt. He traveled east} to the region of Midian and started to live there. {One day as} Moses was sitting beside a well, **16**seven women came to the well. They were all the daughters of the man who was the priest for the Midianites. They got water and filled the troughs in order to give water to their father's sheep and goats. **17**Some shepherds came and {started to} chase them away. But Moses got up and rescued them and helped their sheep and goats to drink.

18When his daughters returned {home}, their father {Jethro (who people also called} Reuel) asked them, "How did you get back {from taking care of the sheep} so quickly today?"

19They replied, "A man from Egypt kept the other shepherds from chasing us away. He also got water for us from the well and gave water to the sheep."

20He said to his daughters, "By leaving him at the well, you did not show this man that we welcome strangers or even repay his kind act. Invite him in so that he can have something to eat!" {So they did, and Moses ate with them.}

21Jethro {invited Moses} to stay with his family and Moses accepted {his offer}. Jethro gave Moses his daughter Zipporah {to be his wife}. **22**When she gave birth to {their first} son, Moses said, "I am a foreigner living in a place foreign to me, so I will name him Gershom."

23Many years went by. During that time, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites in Egypt were still groaning because of the hard work they had to do as slaves. They cried to God in heaven because of the work. **24**When he heard them groaning, he thought about his promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. **25**God saw {how the} Israelites {were being badly treated}, and he comprehended.

Chapter 3

1Moses, on the other hand, was taking care of the sheep that belonged to Jethro (his father-in-law who was a priest to the Midianite people.) One day, he took the flock to the far side of the wildland. He came to a mountain where

God {would reveal himself to Moses and later to the Israelites} called Horeb. **2**While he was there, Yahweh's
messenger appeared to Moses as a fire inside a bush. Moses stared at the burning bush, amazed that the fire was
not burning it completely to ashes. **3**He thought, "I will go closer to see this strange thing! Why is the bush not
burning up?"

4When Yahweh saw Moses coming for a closer look, he called out from the bush, "Moses, Moses!"

"Yes!" Moses replied.

5Yahweh said, "Take off your sandals {to honor me} before you come any closer, because you are standing on
ground that is sacred {because it is near me.} **6**I am God, the one that your father, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all
worshiped." Moses was afraid {that God would kill him if he} looked at him, so he covered his face. **7**Then Yahweh
said, "I have watched closely how badly the Egyptians are treating my people in Egypt. I have heard my people
shouting despairingly because of what the slave drivers are making them do. I am most certainly informed about
how my people are suffering. **8**I am coming down from heaven to rescue them from being slaves to the Egyptians. I
will lead them from Egypt to a fertile land with plenty of room. It will be very good for raising livestock and growing
crops. The peoples called the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites live there now. **9**Truly,
I have now heard the Israelites crying. I have also seen how badly the Egyptians treat them. **10**So now I will send
you to do this: Go to the king of Egypt and lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

11But Moses said to God, "I am not important enough to go to the king in order to bring the Israelites out of
Egypt."

12God said, "Even so, you can trust that I will be with you. When you bring my people out of Egypt, all of you will
worship me right here on this mountain. That will prove to you that I am the one who sent you to them."

13Moses said to God, "If I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God whom your ancestors worshiped has sent
me to you,' they will ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what should I say to them?"

14God replied to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. Tell the Israelites that the God whose name means 'I AM' sent you to
them." **15**God also said to Moses, "You must say this to the Israelites, 'Yahweh has sent me to you. He is the God
Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and your other ancestors worshiped. Yahweh is my eternal name, and this is the name by
which people living at any time must remember me.'

16Go call a meeting with all the Israelite leaders. Tell them, 'Yahweh appeared to me. He is the God Abraham, Isaac,
Jacob, and your other ancestors worshiped. He said: "I have come down to carefully watch {and do something
about} what the Egyptians are doing to you. **17**I promise that I will rescue you from the Egyptians who treat you
badly. I will take you to the land where the peoples called the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and
Jebusites live now. The land is excellent for raising livestock and growing crops.'" **18**The leaders will do what you say.

Then you and the leaders will go to the king of Egypt, and you will say to him, 'Yahweh, the God whom we Hebrews
worship, has made a special visit to us. Please allow us to travel for a few days to a place in the wilderness in order
that there we may offer sacrifices to Yahweh, the God we worship.' **19**But I know that the king of Egypt will not
allow you to go; not even by force. **20**So I will act very powerfully, and I will hurt the Egyptians with very bad things
that only I can do. Then he will chase you away.

21When this happens, I will cause the Egyptians to be willing to help you Hebrews so that, when you leave Egypt,
you will not go out like poor slaves. **22**At that time, each Hebrew woman will ask the women living or visiting nearby
for things made from silver and gold and for clothing. You will be able to have your children wear the things they
give you. That is how you will take everything from the Egyptians."

Chapter 4

1Moses replied to God, “They will completely disbelieve me and ignore me because they will think, ‘Yahweh did not appear to you.’”

2Yahweh said to him, “What is that in your hand?”

Moses answered, “A staff.”

3Yahweh said, “Throw it down on the ground!” So Moses threw the staff on the ground. It became a snake and Moses ran away from it. **4**Then Yahweh said to Moses, “Pick up the snake by its tail.” So Moses picked up the snake by the tail, and it became a staff in his hand again. **5**{Yahweh said, “Do the same thing in front of the Israelite elders} in order that they may believe that I, Yahweh, the God that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and your other ancestors worshiped, truly appeared to you.”

6Yahweh gave Moses another instruction: “Put your hand on your chest inside your robe.” Moses put his hand into his robe. When he brought his hand out, it had a disease that made the skin look as white as snow. **7**Then Yahweh said, “Put your hand in your robe again.” Moses put his hand back inside his robe. This time when he brought it out, amazingly, the skin on his hand looked like the rest of his skin again.

8{Yahweh said, “You can do that in front of the Israelite people, too.} And if they do not believe you or listen to you after seeing the first miracle, they will believe you when you perform the second miracle. **9**But if they do not believe you or listen to what you say even after you show them these two miracles, get some water from the Nile River, and pour it on the dry ground. When you do that, the water that you pour on the dry ground will become blood.”

10Then Moses said to Yahweh, “But Lord, I am not good at speaking to people. I have never been and you talking to me has not made me better. I speak slowly and never know what to say.”

11Then Yahweh said to him, “Do not forget that I, Yahweh, make people’s mouths! I make people unable to speak, or unable to hear, or able to see or not to see! **12**So go now, and I will help you speak, and I will tell you what to say.”

13But Moses replied, “Oh Lord, I ask you, please choose anyone else to send!”

14Then Yahweh became angry with Moses and said to him, “What about your brother Aaron, the descendant of Levi? I know he is a good speaker. He is on his way here right now. When he sees you, he will be very happy. **15**You will tell him what to say. I will help you both to speak and will tell you both what to do. **16**He will speak for you to the Israelite people. He will be your spokesman, and he will think of you as if you were me. **17**Be sure to take your staff with you, because you will perform miracles with it.”

18Moses went back to his father-in-law, Jethro, and said to him, “Please let me go back to my relatives in Egypt to see if they are well.”

Jethro said to Moses, “You may go. Be safe.”

19{While he was still} in Midian, Yahweh told Moses {again}, “Go back to Egypt now, for everyone trying to kill you is now dead.” **20**So Moses put his wife and sons on a donkey and started going toward Egypt. He took the staff with him {as} God {had told him to do}. **21**Yahweh spoke to Moses again, “When you get to Egypt, be sure to do all the miracles that I have given you power to do in front of the king. But I will make him reject you so that he will not let the Israelites leave Egypt. **22**Then say to him, ‘This is what Yahweh says: “Israel is like my firstborn son, **23**and when I told you, ‘Let my son go, so that he may worship me,’ you refused. Therefore, I will kill your firstborn son!”’”

24One night, as they were camping on the way to Egypt, Yahweh confronted {Moses} in order to kill him. **25**Then {Moses’ wife,} Zipporah, took a sharp stone knife and cut off the foreskin of their firstborn son. Then she touched

the foreskin to {Moses'} feet and said, "You are really my husband by blood." **26**She said, "a husband by blood," because she had cut off their son's foreskin. So Yahweh did not harm anyone.

27Meanwhile, Yahweh said to Aaron, "Go into the desert to meet Moses." So Aaron went and met Moses at the mountain where God met Moses and greeted him by kissing him. **28**Moses told Aaron everything that Yahweh had sent him {to Egypt to say to the king and the Israelites} and all the miracles that Yahweh had instructed him {to do}.

29When Moses and Aaron arrived in Egypt, they called a meeting with all the Israelite leaders. **30**Aaron told them everything that Yahweh had told Moses and performed the miracles as the leaders watched. **31**The leaders believed Aaron and Moses. Because they heard that Yahweh had seen how miserable the Israelites were and had come down to help them, the leaders bowed down to worship him.

Chapter 5

1Then Moses and Aaron went to the king. They said to him, "The God {named} Yahweh, whom we Israelites worship, says this to you: 'Let my people go to the desert so that they may have a feast to honor me!'"

2But the king said, "Who is Yahweh? I have never heard of him, so why should I obey what he demands? I will certainly not let the Israelites go!"

3Moses and Aaron replied, "The God we Hebrews worship has made a special visit to us. Please allow us to travel for a few days to a place in the wilderness in order that there we may offer sacrifices to Yahweh, our God. If we do not do that, he will cause us to die from diseases or from attacks by our enemies."

4But the king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, it is pointless for you to distract the Israelites from their work. Get back to work, all of you!"

5Then the king said, "Look, there are too many Israelites in Egypt for you to encourage them to just stop working." **6**That same day the king commanded the Egyptian slave drivers and the Israelite bosses who directed the slaves, **7**"Stop giving the Israelites straw for making bricks. From now on, they will have to go get it themselves. **8**However, still force them to make the same number of bricks that they did before. Do not lower the number at all. They do not want to work. That is why they are asking me to let them go {into the wilderness} to worship their god. **9**Make the men work harder so that they will be too busy to listen to lies {from their leaders}!"

10So the slave drivers and Israelite bosses went to where the Israelites were and said to them, "The king has said that he will no longer give you any straw. **11**So you must go yourselves and get straw where you can find it. But you must keep working to make the same number of bricks." **12**So the Israelites scattered all over Egypt to collect leftover grain stalks to use for straw. **13**As for the slave bosses, they kept harassing them by saying, "Do all the work we assign to you each day. Make the same number of bricks as you did before, when we gave you straw!" **14**{When they were not able to make enough bricks,} the king's slave drivers beat the bosses they had put in charge of the Israelites. They told them, "This is because your work teams have not been able to make the same number of bricks in the last couple of days as they did before."

15Then the Israelite bosses went in {to the palace} and complained to the king, "Why are you treating us this way? **16**Your slave drivers are not giving us any straw for making bricks, but they keep telling us, 'Make the same number of bricks!' They are even beating us. But it is your own slave drivers that are keeping us from making enough bricks."

17But the king said, “You are lazy and do not want to work! That is why you keep saying, ‘Allow us to go {to the
desert} to worship Yahweh.’ **18**Get back to work right now! We are not going to give you any straw, but you must
keep making the same number of bricks!”

19When {the king} said, “You must not make fewer bricks each day,” the Israelite bosses understood how bad their
life was. **20**As they left their meeting with the king, they met Aaron and Moses, who were waiting for them. **21**They
said to Aaron and Moses, “We hope Yahweh notices that you have made the king and his officials hate us. We hope
he punishes you two! You have made them think they should kill us!”

22Moses left them and prayed to Yahweh again, “My Lord, why have you caused all these evil things to happen to
your people? You sent me to help them, not hurt them. **23**Ever since I went to the king and told him what you told
me to say, he has treated your people very badly, and you have not done anything to help them!”

Chapter 6

1Then Yahweh said to Moses, “Now you will see what I will do to the king when I make him let my people go. I will
powerfully force him to chase them from his land!”

2God spoke to Moses again, “I am Yahweh. **3**I showed myself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty, but
they did not fully comprehend {the meaning of} my name Yahweh. **4**I also agreed to bless them. I promised to give
them, as their own, the land where the descendants of Canaan live. That was the land in which they lived as
foreigners.

5Furthermore, I have heard the Israelites complaining because the Egyptians have made them slaves. I always
remember what I promised. **6**Therefore tell the Israelite people that I said this: ‘I am Yahweh. I will take the
Egyptian’s heavy loads off your back. I will deliver you from being their slaves. I will very powerfully save you by
punishing them very harshly. **7**I will claim you as my own people, and I will be the God {you worship}. You will truly
know that I am Yahweh, your God who frees you from the heavy loads that the Egyptians make you carry. **8**I will
bring you to the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you, and it will be yours.
I, Yahweh, am {promising this}.’”

9Moses told that to the Israelites, but they did not believe what he said, because they were discouraged and
overworked.

10Then Yahweh said to Moses, **11**“Go tell the king of Egypt that he must allow the Israelites to leave his land!”

12But Moses said to Yahweh, “Certainly, if the Israelites have not paid attention to what I told them, the king will
not pay attention to what I tell him, since I am a poor speaker.” **13**But Yahweh spoke to Moses and Aaron and
commanded them to go to the Israelites and to the king of Egypt in order to free the Israelites from their slavery in
Egypt.

14These are the original clan leaders:

Jacob’s oldest son Reuben had these sons: Hanok, Pallu, Hezron, and Karmi. The clans of Reuben are descended
from them.

15The sons of Simeon were: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jakin, Zohar, and Shaul. Shaul’s mother was a woman from the
land of Canaan. They were ancestors of clans that have those same names.

16These are the names of the descendants of Levi in each generation: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. Levi was 137
years old when he died. **17**The sons of Gershon were Libni and Shimei. They were ancestors of clans that have
those names. **18**The sons of Kohath were Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. Kohath was 133 years old when he
died. **19**The sons of Merari were Mahli and Mushi. These were ancestors of clans that descended from Levi by each
generation.

20Amram married his father's sister, Jochebed. She was the mother of Aaron and Moses. Amram lived 137 years.

21The sons of Izhar were Korah, Nepheg, and Zichri. **22**The sons of Uzziel were Mishael, Elzaphan, and Sithri.

23Aaron married Elisheba. She was the daughter of Amminadab and sister of Nahshon. Elisheba gave birth to Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

24The sons of Korah were Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph. They were the ancestors of the Korahite people. **25**Aaron's son Eleazar married one of the daughters of Putiel, and she gave birth to Phinehas. These were the clan leaders descended from Levi in each generation.

26Aaron and Moses were the ones to whom Yahweh said, "Lead all the Israelites out of Egypt organized as army units." **27**They were the ones who spoke to the king of Egypt in order to bring the Israelites out of Egypt.

28On the day that Yahweh spoke to Moses in Egypt, **29**he said, "I am Yahweh. Tell the king everything that I say to you."

30But Moses said to Yahweh, "Please listen to me. I am not a good speaker. So why should the king listen to what I tell him?"

Chapter 7

1Yahweh answered, "See, I am putting you in front of the king {like} a god, and your brother Aaron will {speak for you like} a prophet. **2**You must tell everything I instruct you to your {older} brother Aaron, and he will tell it all to the king. He must tell the king to let the Israelites leave his land. **3**But I will make the king stubborn. Because of this, even though I will do many kinds of miracles here in Egypt, **4**the king will not obey you. Then I will punish the Egyptians very severely and will lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt as an army. **5**Once I have proven how powerful I am to the Egyptians by rescuing the Israelites from being their slaves, they will know that I am Yahweh."

6Moses and Aaron did everything that Yahweh told them to do. **7**When {God sent} them to talk to the king of Egypt, Moses was 80 years old and Aaron was 83 years old.

8Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron, **9**"If the king says to you, 'Show me that God sent you by performing a miracle,' then say to Aaron, 'Throw your staff down in front of the king in order that it may become a snake.'"

10So Aaron and Moses went to the king and did what Yahweh told them to do. Aaron threw his staff down in front of the king and his officials, and it became a snake. **11**Then the king called his wise men and men who did magic. They did the same thing, using their magic. **12**They all threw down their staffs, and the staffs became snakes. Then Aaron's snake ate their snakes! **13**But, just as Yahweh had said, the king continued to be stubborn and would not obey what Aaron and Moses said.

14Then Yahweh said to Moses, "The king is very stubborn. He refuses to allow my people to go. **15**So go meet him as he is going down to the Nile River in the morning. Wait for him on the riverbank. Take with you the staff that became a snake. **16**Say to him, 'The God {named} Yahweh, the one we Hebrews worship, sent me to you to tell you to let his people go in order that they may worship him in the desert. But you still have not obeyed. **17**So Yahweh says this: "This is the way you will know that I am Yahweh. Look out! I am going to hit the water that is in the Nile River with the staff that is in my hand. {When I do that,} the water will become blood. **18**Then the fish in the Nile River will die, and the water in the river will smell bad. The Egyptians will wear themselves out trying to find water to drink from the river.'"

19Yahweh continued, “Then tell Aaron, ‘Hold your staff out {as though you were holding it} over all the water in
Egypt—over the rivers, the canals, the ponds, and over all the stored water, in order that all of it may become
blood.’ {When Aaron does that,} there will be blood throughout Egypt, even in wooden and stone jars.”

20So Aaron and Moses did what Yahweh told them to do. As the king and his officials were watching, Aaron lifted
up his staff and then struck the water in the Nile River with it. All the water in the river turned to blood. **21**Then all
the fish in the river died. The water smelled so bad that the Egyptians could not drink the water from the river. All
the water in Egypt was blood. **22**But the Egyptian men who did magic did the same thing using their magic. So, just
as Yahweh had said, the king continued to be stubborn and would not obey what Aaron and Moses said. **23**Then
the king turned and went back to his palace, and he did not think any more about it. **24**All the Egyptians dug into
the ground near the Nile River to get water to drink, because they could not drink the water from the river.

25One week passed after Yahweh struck the Nile River.

Chapter 8

1Then Yahweh said to Moses, “Go back to the king and tell him, ‘Yahweh says that you must let my people go in
order that they can worship me {in the desert.} **2**But if you do not let them go, watch out! I will punish you by
sending frogs to cover your country. **3**Not only will the Nile River be full of frogs, but the frogs will also come up out
of the river into your house. They will come into your bedroom and onto your bed. They will be in the houses of
your slaves and all the rest of your people. They will even get into your ovens and your pans for mixing the
materials for baking bread. **4**The frogs will jump up on you, on the Egyptian people, and on all your slaves.’”

5Yahweh also said to Moses, “Say this to Aaron: ‘Hold your staff in your hand and stretch it out {as though you were
stretching it} over the river, the canals, and the ponds, and cause frogs to come up {from all this water} and to
cover the land of Egypt.’” **6**{After Moses told that to him,} Aaron stretched out his hand {as though he were
stretching it} over all the water in Egypt. Then the frogs came up {from the water} and covered Egypt. **7**But the men
who did magic did the same thing by magic, and they caused more frogs to come up from the water onto the land.

8Then the king called Moses and Aaron and said, “Ask Yahweh to take these frogs away from me and my people.
After that happens, I will allow your people to go to worship Yahweh.”

9Moses said to the king, “Show how you are more glorious than me by telling me when to pray for you and your
officials and the rest of your peoples. I will pray that the frogs stop coming to your houses and stay in the Nile
River.”

10The king replied, “{Pray for us} tomorrow.”

So Moses said, “I will do what you say. You will know that the God {named} Yahweh, {the one we worship, is the
only true God, and that} there is no other God like him when **11**the frogs leave you, your officials, all the rest of your
people and all your houses; when the only ones left are in the Nile River.”

12Then Moses and Aaron left the king. Moses pleaded with Yahweh about the frogs he had used to punish the king.
13Yahweh did just what Moses asked him to do. As a result, all the frogs in the houses, in their courtyards, and in
their fields died. **14**The people gathered together all the dead frogs into big piles, and the land smelled very bad.
15But when the king noticed that the frogs were gone, he made himself stubborn again. Just as Yahweh had said
would happen, the king did not do what Aaron and Moses told him.

16Then Yahweh said to Moses, “Tell Aaron to strike the dusty ground with his staff so that all the dust all over Egypt
will become gnats.” **17**Moses and Aaron obeyed Yahweh. Aaron hit the dusty ground with his staff, and all over
Egypt the dust became gnats. The gnats covered the people and the animals. **18**The men who worked magic tried
to cause gnats to appear, but they could not do it. Gnats were on the people and animals.

19The magicians said to the king, “A god did this!” But just like Yahweh had said, the king continued to be stubborn and would not obey Aaron and Moses.

20Then Yahweh said to Moses, “Get up early tomorrow morning. Wait to meet the king as he comes to the river and tell him, ‘This is what Yahweh says to you: “Let my people go in order that they may worship me. **21**If you do not let my people go immediately, watch out! Be sure that I will shortly send swarms of flies which will cover you, your slaves, the rest of your people, and your houses. All the Egyptian’s houses will be full of flies. They will even cover the ground. **22**But when that happens, I will treat the region of Goshen differently, because my people live there. There will be no swarms of flies there. In that way, you will know that I, Yahweh, am here in this land. **23**I will treat my people and your people differently. I will prove how powerful I am tomorrow!”’” **24**{In the morning, Moses warned the king, but he did not listen.} So Yahweh did what he said he would do. He sent great swarms of flies into the king’s palace and into his officials’ houses. They were everywhere in Egypt. The flies ruined the country.

25Then the king summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “Just go worship your god here in Egypt!”

26But Moses replied, “It would not be right for us to do that, because we will offer sacrifices to Yahweh, the God we worship, that are very offensive to the Egyptians. Look, it is certain that if we offer sacrifices right in front of them that the Egyptians hate passionately, they will kill us by throwing stones at us! **27**We need to travel for three days into the wilderness. There we will offer sacrifices to Yahweh, the God we worship, just as he commands us.”

28So the king said, “I will let your people go to offer sacrifices to Yahweh, the god you worship, in the desert. But you must not go very far. Now pray for me!”

29Moses said {to the king}, “Listen to me! After I leave you, I will pray to Yahweh, asking that he would cause the swarms of flies to leave you, your slaves, and the rest of your people tomorrow. But do not lie to us again by refusing to let our people go to offer sacrifices to Yahweh!” **30**Then Moses left the king and prayed to Yahweh. **31**Yahweh did what Moses asked. He got rid of the swarms of flies from around the king, his slaves, and the rest of his people. No flies remained. **32**But the king was stubborn this time also, and he did not allow the Israelites to go.

Chapter 9

1Then Yahweh said to Moses, “Go to the king and say to him, ‘This is what Yahweh, the God we Hebrews worship, says: “Let my people go in order that they may worship me. **2**Otherwise, if you refuse to free them but continue to keep them {as your slaves}, **3**I warn you that I will soon powerfully punish you by sending a terrible disease on all your domesticated animals to make them sick and die—on your horses, on your donkeys, on your camels, on your cattle, and on your flocks of sheep and goats. **4**But I, Yahweh, will treat the Israelites’ domesticated animals differently than the Egyptians’. None of the Israelites’ domesticated animals will die.”’”

5Yahweh specified when he would do this. He said, “Tomorrow I will do to Egypt what I threatened.”

6The next day Yahweh sent a disease as he had said he would and all of the Egyptians’ domesticated animals died, but none of the Israelites’ domesticated animals died. **7**The king sent {men to look at what happened}, and they were surprised to see that none of the Israelites’ animals had died. {But after they told that to the king,} he continued to be stubborn, and he did not let the Israelites go.

8Then Yahweh said to Aaron and Moses, “Take a few handfuls of ashes from an oven. Moses should throw them up into the air in front of the king. **9**The ashes will spread all over the country of Egypt, because they are fine dust. Everywhere in the land, the ashes will cause sores on the skin which turn red and burst open on both people and animals.” **10**So they took some ashes from an oven and stood in front of the king. Moses threw the ashes up into the air. As the ashes landed on both the Egyptian people and their animals, they caused sores on the skin that turned red and burst open. **11**Because skin sores covered the men who worked magic (along with all the rest of the

Egyptians), they could not challenge Moses. **12**But Yahweh caused the king to continue to be stubborn. He did not obey Moses and Aaron, just as Yahweh had told Moses would happen.

13Then Yahweh said to Moses, “Get up early tomorrow morning. Go and stand in front of the king and tell him that Yahweh God, the one whom the Hebrew people worship, says this: ‘Let my people go in order that they may worship me {in the wilderness}. **14**If you do not, then this time I am planning terrible disasters that will not only make your officials and the rest of your people very sad but also you yourself, in order that you might know that there is no god like me anywhere in the world. **15**By this time I could have powerfully struck you and your people with terrible diseases that would have destroyed your nation. **16**But I have let you live. The reason I have let you live is to show you how strong I am and so that I will be famous all over the world. **17**You are still acting proudly and refusing to let my people go. **18**So listen to this: About this time tomorrow I will cause large balls of ice to fall in Egypt. Between the time Egypt first became a nation and today, there has never been an ice storm as bad as this one will be. **19**So you should send {a message to all people} to put under shelter {their} domesticated animals and everything else that {they} own that is out in the fields. The ice will fall on every person and every animal that is out in the fields and that is not brought under a shelter. They will all die.’”

20{Moses did what Yahweh said.} Some of the king’s officials believed and were afraid of what Yahweh had said. So they quickly brought all their slaves and their animals under shelters. **21**But those who did not believe what Yahweh had said left their slaves and their animals in the fields.

22Then Yahweh said to Moses, “Raise your hand up toward the sky in order that balls of ice {may fall} all over the land of Egypt—on the people, on the animals, and on all the crops in the fields.”

23So Moses lifted his staff up toward the sky, and Yahweh brought a storm with thunder, balls of ice, and lightning. Yahweh caused the balls of ice to fall all over the land of Egypt. **24**While balls of ice were falling, lightning was flashing. There had never been such a huge ice storm like that in Egypt since it first became a country. **25**The ice struck everywhere in Egypt, hitting everything that was outside, animals as well as people. The ice destroyed the crops in the fields and broke limbs off the fruit trees. **26**Only in the region of Goshen, where the Israelites were living, was there no ice.

27Then the king sent {someone} to summon Moses and Aaron. He said to them, “This time {I admit that} I have sinned. {What} Yahweh {has done} is right, and {what} I and my people {have done} is wrong. **28**Pray to Yahweh because his thunder and ice are terrible! I will let you and your people go; you do not have to stay in Egypt any longer.”

29Moses replied, “As soon as I go out of this city, I will lift up my hands and pray to Yahweh. Then the thunder will stop, and no more ice will fall. This will happen in order that you will know that Yahweh, {not your gods, controls everything that happens on} the earth. **30**But I know that you and your officials still do not tremble when Yahweh God comes near.”

31({When the ice fell} it ruined the flax because the blossoms were forming. It also ruined the barley because its grain was ripe. **32**But it did not ruin any of the wheat varieties, because they grow later in the year.)

33So Moses left the king and went outside the city. He raised his hands toward Yahweh and prayed. Then the thunder and the ice storm stopped. The rain also stopped falling on the land of Egypt. **34**But when the king saw that the rain, the ice storm, and the thunder had stopped, he sinned again. He and his officials made themselves stubborn. **35**So, just as Yahweh had predicted to Moses, the king was stubborn and did not allow the Israelites to leave.

Chapter 10

1Then Yahweh said to Moses, “Go to the king again. I have made him and his officials stubborn. I have done so in order that I may have a good reason to do all these miracles among them. **2**I have also done so in order that you would be able to tell your children and your grandchildren how I caused the Egyptians to act very foolishly when I performed all these miracles among them. Then all of you will know that I am Yahweh.”

3So Moses and Aaron went to the king and said to him, “Yahweh God, {the one whom we} Hebrews {worship}, says this, ‘How long will you {stubbornly} refuse to bow to me? Let my people go in order that they may worship me {in the wilderness}! **4**If you do not let them go, I warn you that tomorrow I will bring locusts into your country. **5**They will completely cover the ground so that you will not even be able to see it. They will eat everything that the ice storm did not destroy. They will eat everything that is growing on your fruit trees. **6**They will fill your houses and the houses of all your officials and of all the rest of the Egyptians. There will be more locusts than your parents or your grandparents have ever seen from the time your ancestors first came to this land until now!’” Then Moses {and Aaron} turned and left the king.

7The king’s officials said to him, “This is another trap for us! Let the Israelites go in order that they may worship Yahweh, their god. You must know that our country is already ruined.”

8{The king ordered someone} to bring Moses and Aaron back to him. He said to them, “Go worship Yahweh, your god. But who will go?”

9Moses replied, “We all need to go, everyone, including those who are young and those who are old. We need to take our sons, our daughters, and our flocks of sheep and goats and herds of livestock because a celebration to honor Yahweh is for all of us.”

10The king replied, “I am not about to let you go with your women and children because I do not think Yahweh is about to help you. Watch out so that something bad does not happen to you! **11**Since you keep asking, go worship Yahweh with just your men. But no one else may go!” Then the king drove Moses and Aaron away.

12Then Yahweh said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over Egypt and locusts will come up and cover the country. They will eat every green thing in the whole country, anything that the hail left behind.”

13So Moses held out his staff as though he were stretching it over the country of Egypt. Then Yahweh caused a wind to blow from the east, and it blew over the land all that day and all that night. By the next morning, it had brought the locusts. **14**The locusts came up all over Egypt. They landed everywhere in the whole country. There had never been anything like this huge number of locusts, and there will never be anything like it again. **15**They covered the surface of the ground and made it appear black. They ate all the plants in the land and everything on the trees that the ice storm had not destroyed. They left nothing that was green on any tree or on any plant anywhere in Egypt.

16The king quickly called Aaron and Moses and said, “I have sinned against Yahweh, your god, and against you. **17**Can you forgive me right now for having sinned this one time? Please pray to Yahweh, your god. Just ask him to take away the locusts that will cause us all to die.”

18So Moses and Aaron left the king, and Moses prayed to Yahweh. **19**Then Yahweh changed the wind so that it blew strongly from the west, and it picked up and forced all the locusts into the Sea of Reeds. There were no locusts left anywhere in the country of Egypt. **20**But Yahweh made the king stubborn again, and the king did not let the Israelites go.

21Yahweh said to Moses, “Reach your hand up toward the sky so that it may be dark over all the land of Egypt, so dark that it will seem like people can feel it.” **22**So Moses reached his hand toward the sky, and it became extremely dark all over Egypt for three days and nights. **23**No one could see anyone else. No one went anywhere for three days. But there was light in the area where the Israelites lived.

24The king called Moses and said, “{All right,} you may go and worship Yahweh. Your women and your children may go with you. But your flocks {of sheep and goats} and your herds {of cattle} must remain here.”

25But Moses replied, “No, you must also let us take our sacrifices and burnt offerings to offer to Yahweh, our God. **26**Our domesticated animals must also go with us. We are not going to leave one animal behind because we must take them to worship Yahweh, the God we worship. We will not know what we will need for worshiping Yahweh until we get to where we are going.”

27But Yahweh made the king continue to be stubborn. The king would not allow the Israelites to go. **28**The king said to Moses and Aaron, “Get out of here! Make sure that you never {come to} see me again! The day you see me again, I will have someone kill you!”

29Moses replied, “You are correct! I will never see you again!”

Chapter 11

1Yahweh said to Moses, “I will bring one more disaster on the king of Egypt and on all his people. After that, he will let you leave. When he does, he will absolutely chase you out of Egypt. **2**Speak quickly to all the Israelites. Tell them to ask all their Egyptian neighbors, both men and women, to give them things made from silver and gold.” **3**Yahweh made the Egyptians willing to help the Israelites. Also, the king’s officials and all the rest of the people thought that Moses was one of the most important men in Egypt.

4Then Moses said {to the king}, “This is what Yahweh says: ‘About midnight I will go through Egypt, **5**and I will kill every oldest son in Egypt. I will kill without exception: the rich king’s oldest son, the poor mill slave’s oldest son, and even every oldest male born among the animals. **6**When that happens, people all over Egypt will lament more terribly than anyone ever has lamented before and more than anyone ever will again. **7**But dogs will not even bark at the Israelites or at their animals. Then you will know for sure that I, Yahweh, am treating the Egyptians differently from the Israelites.’ **8**Then all these officials of yours will come and bow down before me and will say, ‘Please get out of Egypt, you and everyone who is with you!’ After that, we will leave Egypt!” When Moses had said that, he left the king very angrily.

9Then Yahweh said to Moses, “The king will not obey you. This is so I can cause many disastrous miracles in his country.”

10Moses and Aaron did all these miracles in front of the king, but Yahweh made the king stubborn. The king did not let the Israelites leave his land.

Chapter 12

1Yahweh said to Aaron and Moses in Egypt, **2**“Start counting your months at this new moon. It will be the Israelites’ first month of the year. **3**Tell the whole Israelite community, ‘On the tenth day of this month every man who leads a family must take a young sheep or a young goat for his household. **4**If there are not enough people in his family to eat a whole cooked lamb, then his family and a family that lives nearby may kill one animal. Plan to share the lamb according to the number of people in each family and according to how much each person can eat. **5**You may choose a sheep or a goat; but it must be a one-year-old male, and it must be perfect, without any defects. **6**You must take special care of these animals until the fourteenth day of this month. On that day, all the Israelites must kill the young sheep or young goats in the evening. **7**Then they must take some of the blood from the young sheep or young goats, and they must smear it on the two doorposts and on the tops of the doorframes of the houses in which they will eat the meat. **8**They must roast the animals over a fire and eat the meat that same night. They must eat it with bitter herbs and with bread that does not have yeast in it. **9**You must not eat any of the meat uncooked,

and you must not cook the meat in water. You must do this: cook the whole animal over a fire. Do not remove the head, legs, or inside parts. **10**Do not save any of the meat until the next morning. Any meat that you have not eaten by morning, you must burn to ash. **11**When you eat it, you must be dressed ready to travel. You must have your sandals on your feet and your walking staff in your hands. You must eat it hurriedly. It will be a festival called Passover to honor me, Yahweh.

12On that night I will go throughout Egypt, and I will kill all the oldest males in Egypt, both humans and animals. I am punishing all the Egyptians' gods. I am Yahweh. **13**The blood on your houses will show that you are obeying me. When I see the blood, I will go past those houses. I will not harm the people who are in those houses when I come to punish the Egyptians.

14You will make this day a feast to remember and celebrate what I, Yahweh, will have done for you. This is a rule for you: every generation of Israelites must celebrate this annual feast for all of time. **15**For seven days you must eat bread that has no yeast in it. On the first day of that week, you must remove all the yeast that is in your houses. During those seven days, if anyone eats bread that has yeast in it, you must drive that person out from your people. **16**On the first day of that week, you must have a holy meeting. You must do the same thing on the seventh day. People must not work at all on those two days. The only work you may do is to prepare food to eat.

17You must celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread on this day because this day is exactly when I am rescuing all your tribes from slavery in Egypt. This is a law for you: every generation of Israelites for all of time must celebrate to remember that I rescued you on this day. **18**On the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month of the year, you must stop eating bread that has yeast in it. You may not eat bread with yeast in it again until the evening of the twenty-first day of that month. **19**For those seven days you must not have any yeast in your house. During that time, if anyone—either a foreigner or an Israelite—eats bread that has yeast in it, you must drive that person out from your people. **20**Do not eat any yeast. Wherever you are living, you must eat bread that does not have yeast in it.'"

21Then Moses summoned all the Israelite leaders. He said to them, "Each family should select a young sheep or young goat and kill it to eat it to celebrate the festival that you will call 'Passover.' **22**{Let the lamb's blood drain} into a bowl. Get a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood. Then wipe some of the blood on the top of the doorframe and on the doorposts of your houses. The people in each house must stay inside the house until the next morning. **23**When Yahweh goes through Egypt to kill every oldest male, he will see the blood on your doorframes. Because of that, he will pass over those houses and will not allow the killing-destroyer to enter your houses to kill your oldest sons.

24You and your descendants must celebrate this ritual forever; this is a law. **25**When you arrive in the land that Yahweh will give to you as he promised, you must keep celebrating this ritual every year. **26**When your children ask you, 'What does this ritual mean?' **27**you must tell them, 'This ritual is to remember how your ancestors sacrificed lambs on the night that Yahweh's angel passed over the houses of the Israelites when they were in Egypt. He killed the oldest males in all the Egyptian houses, but he did not kill the sons in our houses." After Moses told them this, the elders all bowed their heads and worshiped Yahweh. **28**Then the Israelites did exactly what Yahweh told Moses and Aaron to tell them to do.

29At midnight Yahweh killed all the Egyptians' oldest sons, all over Egypt. This included the rich king's oldest son, the oldest sons of the prisoners in the dungeons, and the oldest males of all the {Egyptians'} livestock. **30**That night the king, all his officials, and all the rest of the Egyptians awoke and discovered what had happened. They wailed loudly all over Egypt, because in every house someone's son had died.

31That night the king summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Get up, you and all the other Israelites, and get away from my people and country now! Go and worship Yahweh, as you requested! **32**You may even take your flocks of sheep and goats and herds of cattle just as you requested. Just leave! Ask Yahweh to bless me also!"

33The Egyptians helped the Israelites to leave their country quickly. They said, "Otherwise, we will all die!" **34**So the Israelites prepared to leave at once. They took the bowls in which they mixed the dough to make bread and the

dough that was in the bowls without any yeast in it, and they wrapped the bowls in their cloaks. They put the bowls on their shoulders. **35**Then the Israelites did as Moses told them. They went to their Egyptian neighbors and asked them for silver, gold, and clothing. **36**Yahweh caused the Egyptians to greatly respect the Israelites, so they gave them what they asked for. In that way, the Israelites carried away the wealth of the Egyptians.

37The Israelites walked from the city of Rameses to the town of Succoth. There were about 600, 000 men who went, in addition to the women and children. **38**Many other people who were not Israelites went along with them. There was also a large amount of livestock, including flocks of sheep and goats and herds of cattle. **39**Pharaoh forced the Israelites to leave Egypt so quickly that they did not have time to prepare food to take with them or to allow the bread dough to form yeast. When they made bread with the dough they brought from Egypt, they made flatbread because it did not have yeast.

40The Israelites had lived in Egypt for 430 years. **41**On the day that those 430 years ended, on that very day, all the tribes of Yahweh's people left Egypt. **42**It was a night when the Israelites stayed awake as Yahweh brought them out of Egypt. So this same night every year is a night that they dedicate to Yahweh, a night when the Israelites and their descendants in every generation remember how Yahweh kept their ancestors safe.

43Then Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the law about the Passover ritual: Do not let foreigners eat the Passover meal. **44**But if anyone buys a slave and circumcises him, that slave may eat the Passover meal. **45**Do not let people who are living temporarily among you who are not Israelites or servants to whom you pay money eat the Passover meal. **46**You must eat the Passover meal inside one house. Do not take any of the meat outside the house. Do not break the lamb's bones. **47**The whole Israelite community must celebrate this festival.

48When someone from another country comes to live with you and wants to celebrate Yahweh's Passover festival, circumcise all the males in his household. Then he can eat the Passover meal, and you should treat that man as though he had been born an Israelite. But do not allow men who are not circumcised to eat the Passover meal. **49**These rules apply to people who were born as Israelites and to foreigners who come and live among you."

50All the Israelites obeyed Moses and Aaron and did what Yahweh had commanded. **51**On that very day, Yahweh brought all the Israelite tribes out of Egypt.

Chapter 13

1Yahweh said to Moses, **2**"Consecrate all the firstborn {males} in order that they may belong to me. The firstborn {males} of {the Israelite} people and of {their} animals will be mine."

3Moses said to the people, "Always remember today! This is the day that you left Egypt. This is the day I freed you from being the Egyptians' slaves. Yahweh has powerfully brought you out of Egypt. Do not eat any bread that has yeast in it {whenever you celebrate this day}. **4**You are leaving Egypt on this day, which is the first day of the month of Aviv. **5**Later, when Yahweh brings you into the land where the descendants of Canaan, Heth, Amor, Hiv, and Jebus now live, the land that he promised your ancestors that he would give to you, a land that will be very good for raising livestock and growing crops, you must celebrate this festival in this month every year. **6**For seven days the bread you eat must not have any yeast in it. On the seventh day, you must have a celebration to honor Yahweh. **7**Do not eat bread that has yeast in it for seven days. You should not have any yeast or bread made with yeast anywhere in your land.

8On the day that you celebrate the festival, you must tell your children, 'We are doing this to remember what Yahweh did for us when we left Egypt.' **9**The celebration will be like something you tie on your forehead or on your wrist. It will remind you to recite to others what Yahweh has instructed you, because you are grateful to him for powerfully bringing you out of Egypt. **10**So you must celebrate this festival every year, forever, at the time Yahweh has appointed.

11Yahweh will bring you into the land where the descendants of Canaan live, as he promised to you and your
ancestors that he would do. When he gives that land to you, **12**you must give all the firstborn males of both people
and animals to Yahweh. These all will belong to Yahweh. **13**In the case of a firstborn donkey, you must buy it back
by killing a lamb instead of it. If you do not buy it back, you must kill the donkey by breaking its neck. You must buy
back every one of your firstborn sons.

14In the future, when one of your children asks, 'What does this mean?' you must say to him, 'Yahweh powerfully
brought us out of Egypt and freed us from being slaves there. **15**What happened was: The king of Egypt did not let
us leave his land, so Yahweh killed all the firstborn males in Egypt, both the boys and the firstborn of their
livestock. That is why we now sacrifice to Yahweh all the firstborn of our livestock, but we buy back our own
firstborn sons.' **16**This celebration will be like something you tie on your wrist or on your forehead to remind you
that Yahweh powerfully brought you out of Egypt."

17When the king of Egypt let the Israelites go, God did not guide them along the road toward the Philistines' land.
Even though it was shorter, God thought, "If enemies attack them, they may change their minds and go back to
Egypt." **18**Instead, God led them to go around through the wilderness toward the Sea of Reeds. The Israelites left
Egypt in an orderly formation.

19Moses had them take the bones of Joseph along with them, because Joseph long ago had made the Israelites
promise that they would do that. He had said to them, "God will always care for you. {When he brings you to the
promised land,} you must carry my bones with you."

20The Israelites went from Succoth to Etham (which was at the edge of the wilderness). They set up their tents
there. **21**When they walked during the daytime, Yahweh went in front of them in a tall cloud to show them the way.
During the night, he went in front of them in a tall flame so they had light and could travel in the daytime and also
at nighttime. **22**Yahweh never left them. He was there in the tall cloud during the day and in the tall flame during
the night.

Chapter 14

1Then Yahweh said to Moses, **2**"Tell the Israelites to turn toward Pi Hahiroth and camp near it. That place is
between Migdol and the {Red} Sea, near Baal Zephon. Set up your tents there, close to the sea. **3**When the king
knows you have done that, he will think, 'The Israelites are lost. They are wandering around, and the desert blocks
their path.' **4**I will make the king stubborn again and he will chase you {with his army}. Then people will revere me
more than the king and his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am Yahweh." {So Moses told the Israelites
that,} and they did what he told them to do.

5When someone told the king of Egypt that the Israelites had escaped, he and his officials changed how they were
thinking about them and said, "What have we done? The Israelites will no longer be our slaves because we let them
go!" **6**So the king had {someone} fasten his horses to his chariot and he rode out with his army. **7**{When he left} he
took all Egypt's chariots, including the best 600 chariots. In each chariot {he placed a driver, a soldier, and} a
commander. **8**Yahweh made the king of Egypt stubborn, so he {and his army} chased the Israelites. The Israelites
marched out confidently. **9**The Egyptian army, with all the king's horses and chariots and horsemen, chased after
the Israelites. They caught up with them as they were camped near the sea, close to Pi Hahiroth, in front of Baal
Zephon.

10When the king's army got near, the Israelite people were surprised to see that the Egyptians were marching
toward them. They were terrified, so they cried out to Yahweh to help them. **11**Then they said to Moses, "You have
not helped us by bringing us out of Egypt. {Pharaoh's army is going to} kill us here in the wilderness. {If we had
stayed in Egypt,} someone would have buried us in graves. **12**That is what we told you when we were in Egypt. We

said, ‘Leave us alone, and let us work for the Egyptians.’ It would have been better for us to be slaves for the Egyptians than to die here in the desert!”

13Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid! Stand strong and see how Yahweh will rescue you. He will save you today, and you will never see the Egyptians that you are looking at today again. **14**Yahweh will fight for you! Just stay calm. There is nothing else that you will have to do.”

15Then Yahweh said to Moses, “Instead of asking me to help you, tell the people to pack their tents and prepare to march. **16**You must lift up your staff and stretch out the hand holding it over the sea to cause it to divide. Then the Israelites will go in the middle of the sea, walking on dry ground. **17**Watch me! I will make the Egyptians stubborn so that they will chase the Israelites. Then, because of what I will do to the king, his army, his chariots, and his horsemen, people will revere me. **18**When I have won a glorious victory over the king, his chariots, and his horsemen, the {other} Egyptians will know that I am Yahweh, {the God who can do anything}.”

19Then the angel of God, who had been in front of the Israelites, moved and went behind them. The tall, bright cloud that had been in front of them also moved to be behind them. **20**The cloud was between the Egyptian army and the Israelites. The cloud caused the Egyptian army to be in the darkness, but it gave light to the Israelites. As a result, neither group could come near the other group during the whole night. **21**Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. Then Yahweh sent a strong wind from the east. It blew all night and pushed the water apart, and it caused the land between the water to dry up. **22**Then the Israelites went on the dry land in the middle of the sea. The water was like a wall on each side of them, on the right side and on the left side.

23Then the Egyptian army went after them into the middle of the sea with their horses, chariots, and horsemen. **24**Just before dawn, Yahweh looked down from the fiery cloud, and then he caused the Egyptian army to panic. **25**He caused the wheels of the chariots to get stuck in the ground so that they could hardly move. So the Egyptians said, “Yahweh is fighting for the Israelites against us; we must escape from them!”

26Then Yahweh said to Moses, “Stretch out your arm over the sea. Then the water will come back on the Egyptians, on their chariots, and their horsemen.” **27**So Moses stretched out his arm above the sea, and the water returned to its normal level just before dawn. The Egyptians tried to escape, but Yahweh hurled them back into the sea. **28**The water returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and the whole Egyptian army that had tried to follow the Israelites into the sea. Every one of the Egyptians died.

29But the Israelites had already crossed through the sea by walking on dry ground. The water was like two walls, one on the right side and one on the left side. **30**That is the way Yahweh saved the Israelites from the Egyptian army on that day. The Israelites saw the Egyptians lying dead. Their bodies washed up on the shore. **31**The Israelites saw what Yahweh powerfully did to the Egyptians, and they revered Yahweh. They trusted Yahweh and his servant Moses.

Chapter 15

1Then Moses and all the Israelites sang this song to Yahweh. They each sang,

“I will sing to Yahweh because he has won a great victory;

He has thrown the horses and the charioteers into the sea!

2Yahweh makes me strong, and I will sing about him.

He has saved me.

He is my God, and I will celebrate {because of what he did for me}.

He was my father’s God, and I will tell others how great he is.

3Yahweh is a warrior;

Yahweh is his name.

4He has thrown the king's chariots and his army into the sea;

The king's best officers all drowned in the Sea of Reeds.

5The deep water covered them;

they sank to the bottom like a rock.

6O Yahweh, your power is immense;

with that power, O Yahweh, you have crushed the enemy into pieces.

7You use your great strength to defeat your enemies.

When you are angry, you destroy them

like a fire burns up straw.

8You blew on the sea, and the water piled up high;

the water became like mounds of dirt.

In the deepest part of the sea, the water became thick, as though it were frozen.

9Our enemies said,

'We will go after them

and catch up to them.

We will do whatever we want to them!

We will draw our swords

and defeat them;

then we will divide up everything we take from them.'

10Your wind blew,

and then the sea covered them.

They sank like lead in the big waves.

11Yahweh, there is no other god like you!

There is no one like you!

You are wonderfully different from everything else.

Everyone fears and praises you for all the miracles you do!

12You used your power

to make the earth open and our enemies go down into it!

13You are leading the people you bought because you always love us;

Because {you use} your strength {for our good}, you are guiding us to the home that you set apart.

14The people of other nations will hear what you have done,

and they will tremble.

The people in Philistia will be terrified.

15The chiefs in Edom will be dismayed.

The leaders in Moab will be so afraid that they will shake.

All those who live in Canaan will faint.

16They will be terrified and fearful because of your great strength.

But they will be as silent as stones

until we, your people, march past them,

the people you freed {from being slaves in Egypt.}

17You will bring us {into the promised land of Canaan.}

You will enable us to live on your hill,

in the place that you, Yahweh, have chosen to be your home,

in the holy place, our Lord,

that you yourself will build.

18O Yahweh, you will rule forever!"

19When the king's horses and chariots and horsemen tried to go through the sea, Yahweh caused the water to come back and cover them. But the Israelite people walked through the middle of the sea on dry ground. **20**Then Miriam, who was Aaron's older sister and a prophetess, picked up her tambourine and led all the other women who had tambourines out to dance. **21**Miriam sang to Yahweh this song: "Sing to Yahweh because he has triumphed gloriously over his enemies. He has thrown the horses and their riders into the sea."

22Then Moses led the Israelite people away from the Red Sea. They went to the wilderness of Shur. They walked for three days, but they could not find any water. **23**So they went on and came to a place named Marah. There was water there, but they could not drink it, because it was bitter. That is why they named the place Marah, which is the Hebrew word that means 'bitter.' **24**The people complained to Moses, saying, "What are we going to drink?" **25**So Moses prayed to Yahweh. Then Yahweh showed him a branch. He took the branch and threw it into the water, and the water became good to drink. There at Marah, Yahweh gave them a fixed rule by which to live. He also tested them there {to determine if they would obey him.} **26**He said, "I am Yahweh, your God. If you will obey me when I speak to you and do those things that I say are right and listen to all the things that I tell you, I will keep you from all the diseases that I brought on the Egyptians. Do not forget that I am Yahweh, the one who heals you."

27After they left Marah, they came to an oasis named Elim. There were 12 springs of water and 70 palm trees there. So they camped there.

Chapter 16

1They left Elim, and all the Israelite people came to the wilderness of Sin between Elim and Sinai Mountain. That was on the fifteenth day of the second month after they left Egypt. **2**There in the wilderness, the Israelite people

complained against Moses and Aaron. **3**They said to them, “We wish that Yahweh had killed us in Egypt! There we had meat to cook and all the bread that we wanted to eat. But you have brought us into this desert in order that we will all starve until we die!”

4Yahweh said to Moses, “Watch what I am going to do. I am going to send bread from the sky for you. When I do that, the people must go out of their tents every day and gather enough to eat on that day. When I do that, I will find out whether they will obey me or not. **5**On the sixth day {of each week}, they should gather and prepare twice as much as on the other days {so they do not have to gather any on the seventh day}.”

6So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelite people, “This evening you will know that it was Yahweh{, not us,} who brought you out of Egypt. **7**In the morning you will see how great Yahweh is, because he has heard how you have complained against him. We are not important enough for your complaints.” **8**Then Moses also said, “Each evening Yahweh will give you meat to eat, and each morning he will give you enough bread to make you full. He has heard how you have complained about him. We are unimportant; when you complain, it is really about Yahweh, not us.”

9Then Moses said to Aaron, “Tell all the Israelite people, ‘Come and stand here in the presence of Yahweh, because he has heard what you have been complaining about.’” **10**So as Aaron told the Israelites that, they turned to look toward the desert and were surprised to see the dazzling light of Yahweh in the cloud {that had been leading them}.

11Then Yahweh said to Moses, **12**“I have heard what the Israelites have been complaining about. So say to them, ‘At twilight, you will have meat to eat, and in the morning you will have bread. You will have all you want of it to eat. Then you will know that I am Yahweh, your God.’”

13That evening quails appeared, and there were so many that they covered the campsite. The next morning there were small drops of water all around the campsite. **14**When the water on the ground dried up, they saw a thin layer of something that looked like {small white} flakes on the desert ground. It looked like a thin layer of ice on the ground. **15**When the Israelites saw it, they did not know what it was, so they said to each other, “What is it?”

Moses replied to them, “It is the food Yahweh has given you to eat. **16**This is what Yahweh has commanded: Each of you should gather as much as you need to eat. Gather two liters for each person who lives in your tents.” **17**So that is what the Israelite people did. Some gathered more and some gathered less. **18**Because they gathered two liters per person, when they measured what they had gathered, those who had gathered a lot did not have anything left over. Those who had gathered less still had enough to eat. Each person gathered just enough.

19Moses said to them, “Do not leave any of it to eat tomorrow morning!” **20**Some of them did not obey what Moses said. They kept some of it until the next morning. However, it was full of maggots and smelled rotten. That made Moses angry. **21**Each morning they gathered as much as they needed. Later, when the sun got hot, what was left on the ground melted.

22On the sixth day, each person was able to gather four liters of bread, which was twice as much as they gathered on the other days. When the leaders of the people came to Moses and told him about that, **23**Moses said to them, “This is what Yahweh has told you: Tomorrow will be a day for you to rest. It will be a day set apart for Yahweh. So today, bake or boil what you will need for today and for tomorrow. Whatever is left this evening, you should put aside and keep it to eat tomorrow.”

24So they did what Moses told them. What was left over, they kept until the next day. It did not spoil and did not get maggots in it! **25**On that day, Moses said, “Eat today what you have saved from yesterday because today is a day of rest to Yahweh. Today you will not find any of that food outside. **26**Every week, you must gather it for six days; but on the seventh day, which will be a day of rest for you, there will not be any to gather.”

27On the seventh day, some of the people went outside their tents to gather some of that food, but could not find any. **28**Then Yahweh told Moses to say this to the people: “Yahweh is angry because for a long time you people have refused to do all the things that he has told you to do! **29**Listen! Since Yahweh has given you a day of rest, on

the sixth day of each week, he will therefore be giving you enough of this food for two days. Each of you should stay in his tent, not going anywhere on the seventh day!" **30**So the people rested on the seventh day.

31The Israelites called this food 'manna.' It looked white, like the color of coriander seeds, and it tasted like thin wafers made with honey. **32**Moses said, "This is what Yahweh has told you: 'You must keep two liters of it for all future generations so that they can see the food that I gave you to eat in the desert when I brought you out of Egypt.'"

33And he said to Aaron, "Take a jar, and put two liters of manna in it. Then put it in a place where Yahweh can see it. You must keep it like that for all future generations." **34**{Later} Aaron {would} put the jar in front of the record of the agreement between Yahweh and Israel in order to keep the manna as Yahweh had commanded Moses. **35**The Israelites ate manna every day for forty years until they came to where there were people, at the border of the land of Canaan. **36**{Now two liters is called} an omer, which is a tenth of an ephah.

Chapter 17

1Then Yahweh commanded all the Israelites to travel from the wilderness of Sin and camp at a place called Rephidim, and they did. However, there was no water there for the people to drink. **2**So the people complained to Moses again, saying, "Give us water to drink!"

Moses replied to them, "You should not quarrel with me! You should not test Yahweh!"

3But the people were very thirsty, and they continued to complain to Moses. They were saying, "You only brought us out here to kill us and our children and cattle by not letting us have any water to drink!"

4So Moses prayed to Yahweh. He said, "How shall I deal with these people? They are almost ready {to kill me} by throwing stones {at me}!"

5Yahweh said to Moses, "Lead the people and walk in front of them. Take some of the elders of the Israelite people with you. Carry in your hand the staff you used to strike the Nile River. **6**Watch me! I will stand in front of you on top of a large rock at the foot of Mount Sinai. Strike the rock with your stick. When you do that, water for the people to drink will flow out of the rock." Moses did what God had said, and the elders saw it happen. **7**Moses named that place both Masseh (because the Israelites tested Yahweh by questioning if he was really able to help them or not) and Meribah (because they were complaining all the time to him).

8Then the people of Amalek came and fought against the Israelite people at Rephidim. **9**Moses said to Joshua, "Choose some men to go out and fight against the people of Amalek tomorrow. I will stand on the top of the hill, holding the staff that God told me to carry." **10**So Joshua obeyed Moses. He {took some men} to fight against the people of Amalek.

{While they were fighting,} Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill {so that they could see the whole battle area}. **11**Then this happened: Whenever Moses lifted up his arms, the Israelite men started to win the battle; whenever he lowered his arms, the Amalekite army started to win. **12**But Moses' arms became tired. So Aaron and Hur brought a large stone for him to sit on. While he was sitting on it, those two held up his arms, one man on either side of him. In that way, they kept his arms lifted up until the sun went down. **13**In this way Joshua and the men with him defeated the Amalekite king and his army in battle.

14Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Write an account of this battle and then read it to Joshua. Also write that I will so completely destroy the people of Amalek that no one in the world will remember who they were." **15**Then Moses built a stone altar there and named it "Yahweh is my flag." **16**He said, "Because they fought against him, Yahweh will fight against the people of Amalek forever!"

Chapter 18

1Jethro, who was the priest for the people of Midian, and who was also Moses' father-in-law, heard about all that
God had done for Moses and for God's people, the Israelites. He heard about how Yahweh had brought them out
of Egypt. **2**Moses had sent his wife Zipporah {and his two sons} back home {when he was returning to Egypt}. So
when Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came to him, he brought her **3**and her sons. One son's name was Gershom,
which sounds like the Hebrew word that means "foreigner," because Moses had said, "I have been a foreigner living
in another land." **4**Her other son's name was Eliezer, which sounds like the Hebrew word that means "God helps
me," because Moses had said, "God, whom my father worshiped, has helped me and saved me from the king of
Egypt killing me."

5While Moses {and the Israelites} camped in the wilderness near {Sinai}, God's {holy} mountain, Jethro (Moses's
father-in-law) came to him, bringing along Moses' wife and two sons. **6**Jethro had sent a message to Moses, "I, your
father-in-law, Jethro, am coming to see you. I am bringing your wife and her two sons!" **7**So Moses went out {of the
campsite} to meet his father-in-law. He bowed before him and kissed him {on the cheek}. They both asked each
other, "Have you been well?" Then they went into {Moses'} tent. **8**Moses told Jethro everything that Yahweh had
done to the king {and all the other people in Egypt} in order to help the Israelite people. He also told him about the
troubles they had experienced on the way, and about how Yahweh had helped them.

9Jethro praised Yahweh when he heard that Yahweh had rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and had been
very good to them. **10**He said, "Praise Yahweh, who has rescued you from the powerful Egyptian {army} and from
the powerful Egyptian king and has set the Israelites free from the control of the Egyptians! **11**Now I know that
Yahweh is greater than all other gods, because he rescued the Israelites from their proud enemies." **12**Then Jethro
(who was Moses' father-in-law) brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices for God. Aaron and the Israelite elders
came and ate a meal with Moses' father-in-law to honor God.

13The next day, Moses sat down at the place where he settled disputes among the people. The people asked Moses
to judge their disputes from the morning until the evening. **14**When Jethro saw everything that Moses was doing
for the people, he said, "Do not lead the people this way. You should not sit here alone letting everyone demand
that you judge for them all day!"

15Moses replied to his father-in-law, "I am doing this because the people keep coming to me to find out what God
desires. **16**When they cannot agree about something, they come to me, and they ask me to decide which of them is
right. When I decide, I also explain to them how God's laws and instructions apply in that situation."

17Jethro said to him, "What you are doing is not beneficial. **18**You and these people will wear yourselves out! This
work is too much for you. You are not able to do it by yourself. **19**Now listen to what I will tell you to do. If you do
what I suggest, God will help you. You should continue to represent the people to God and tell him about the
people's disputes. **20**You should also teach them God's law and instructions. You should also explain to them how
they should act and the things that they should do. **21**In addition, you should find some capable Israelite men to
help you. Choose men who respect God, who are trustworthy, and who will not accept bribes. Appoint some of
them to make decisions for groups of ten people, some for groups of fifty people, some for groups of a hundred
people, and some for groups of a thousand people. **22**Allow them to settle disputes for the people usually. It should
work like this: The difficult matters they can bring to you, but the matters that are simple, they can decide
themselves. Do this to make the work easier for you as they help you do that work. **23**If you do that, you will be able
to continue doing what God commands, and all the people will be able to live peacefully with each other."

24Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that Jethro told him. **25**Then Moses chose capable men from
among the Israelite people and made them chiefs over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers

of fifties, and rulers of tens. **26**They usually settled disputes for the people. They brought the difficult cases to Moses, but they decided the simple cases by themselves.

27Then Moses said goodbye to his father-in-law, and Jethro returned home.

Chapter 19

1On the first day of the third month after the Israelites left Egypt, they arrived at the wilderness of Sinai. **2**After they left Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai, and they set up their tents at the base of the mountain.

3Moses climbed up {the mountain to talk} with God. Yahweh called to him from {the top} of the mountain and said, "This is what I want you to say to the Israelite people, the descendants of Jacob, **4**'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians. You have seen what I did for you and how I brought you here to me as if I had carried you on top of eagles' wings. **5**Therefore, if you very carefully do what I tell you to do and obey all that I require in what we agreed by swearing to, you will be my own people. You will be my personal property from among all of the nations. Although all the earth is mine, **6**you will be my priestly kingdom and a nation dedicated to me.' That is what you must tell the Israelites."

7So Moses went down the mountain and called the elders of the people. He told them everything that Yahweh had told him to tell them. **8**The people all said, "We will do everything that Yahweh has told us to do." Then Moses climbed back up the mountain and reported to Yahweh what the people had said.

9Then Yahweh said to Moses "Listen carefully. I will come to you from inside a thick cloud. When I am speaking to you, the people will hear it, and they will always believe that you are their leader." Then Moses told Yahweh what the people said.

10Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Go back down to the people again. {Tell them to get ready for my coming.} They must purify themselves today and tomorrow. They must also wash their clothes **11**so they will be ready on the third day. On that day I will come down to Mount Sinai to where all the people can see me. **12**You must make a boundary around the base of the mountain to protect the people. Tell them, 'Be sure that you do not climb the mountain or even touch it. You must kill anyone who touches the base of the mountain. **13**Do not let anyone touch any person or any animal that touches the mountain. Therefore, you must kill any person or animal that touches the mountain by throwing stones at it or shooting it with arrows.' But when you hear a long, loud trumpet sound, the people can come close to the base of the mountain."

14So Moses went down the mountain again and told the people to purify {themselves and to get ready for Yahweh's coming. They did what Moses told them to do,} and they also washed their clothes. **15**Then Moses said to the people, "Be ready on the third day, and you men must not have sexual relations with any women {until after then}."

16On the third day, during the morning, there was thunder, lightning, a very dark cloud on the mountain, and a very loud horn sound. The people in the camp shook because they were very afraid. **17**Then Moses led the people outside the camp to meet with God. They stood around the base of the mountain. **18**Then Yahweh descended on Mount Sinai, surrounded by fire. That caused the entire mountain to smoke. The smoke rose up like the smoke from the chimney of a furnace, and the whole mountain shook violently. **19**As the sound of the horn continued to become louder, Moses spoke to God, and God answered him in a thunderous voice.

20Then Yahweh came down again onto the top of Mount Sinai, and he summoned Moses to come up to the top of the mountain. So Moses went up. **21**Yahweh said to Moses, "Go down again and warn the people not to cross the boundary in order to look at me. If they do that, many of them will die. **22**Also, the priests who come near me must purify themselves. If they do not do that, I will punish them."

23Then Moses said to Yahweh, “The people will not climb the mountain because you commanded them, saying, ‘Set
a boundary around the mountain, to consecrate it.’”

24Yahweh said to Moses, “Go down the mountain and bring Aaron back up with you. But do not allow the priests or
other people to cross the boundary to come up to me. If they cross it, I will punish them.” **25**So Moses went down
the mountain again and told the people what Yahweh had said.

Chapter 20

1Then God spoke these words to the Israelites. **2**“I am Yahweh your God, the one you worship. I am the one who
brought you out of the land of Egypt. I am the one who freed you from being slaves there. **3**Do not worship any
god other than me.

4Do not carve yourself a figure that looks like anything in the sky or that is on the ground or that is in the water
under the ground. **5**Do not bow down to any idol or worship it, because I am Yahweh your God. I demand that you
worship me only! I will punish the descendants of those who hate me. I will punish their descendants for three,
even four generations. **6**However, I will faithfully love thousands of generations of those who love me and obey my
commandments.

7Do not use my name carelessly, because I am Yahweh your God, and I will certainly punish those who use my
name for wrong purposes.

8Remember that the seventh day of every week belongs to me. **9**There are six days each week for you to do all your
work. **10**But the seventh day is a day of rest, a day dedicated to me, Yahweh your God. On that day you must not do
any work. Neither you nor your sons, your daughters, your male or female slaves, your livestock, and not even
foreigners who are living in your country may work. **11**Do this because I, Yahweh, created the sky, the earth, the
ocean, and everything that is in them in six days. Then I stopped my work of creating everything and rested on the
seventh day. That is the reason that I, Yahweh, have blessed the rest day and set it apart to be a sacred day.

12Honor your father and your mother, in order that you may live a long time in the land that I, Yahweh your God,
will give you.

13Do not murder anyone.

14Do not commit adultery with anyone.

15Do not steal anything.

16Do not falsely accuse anyone of committing a crime.

17Do not covet someone else’s house, someone else’s wife, someone else’s male or female slave, someone else’s
livestock, someone else’s donkeys, or anything else that another person owns.”

18When the people heard the thunder and saw the lightning, and when they heard the sound of the horn and saw
the smoke on the mountain, they were afraid and trembled. They stood a safe distance away **19**and said to Moses,
“You talk to us! We will listen! But do not let God speak to us anymore. We are afraid that if he speaks anymore to
us, we will die.”

20Moses replied to the people, “Do not be afraid! God has come to observe how you will behave. He wants you to
honor him and to not sin.”

21Then, as the people watched from a distance, Moses went close to the black cloud where God was.

22Yahweh said to Moses, “Say this to the Israelite people, ‘You have heard how I, Yahweh, have spoken to you from
heaven. **23**Therefore, do not make any gods of silver or gold that you will worship instead of me. **24**Make an altar
out of earth for me. Sacrifice your burnt offerings on it, your offerings to promise friendship with me, and also your
sheep and oxen. Worship me in any place that I choose for you to honor me; if you do that, I will come to you and
bless you. **25**If you build an altar for me out of stone, do not cut the stones because the cutting tool will profane the
altar. **26**Do not climb steps to my altar so that no one may see your genitals.’

Chapter 21

1These are the laws that you must establish for the Israelite nation:

2When you buy a Hebrew slave, he is to serve you for only six years. In the seventh year you must free him from
being your slave, and he does not have to pay you anything for setting him free. **3**If he became your slave alone,
you will free him alone. But if he had a wife, you must free both him and his wife. **4**If the master of a slave gives
him a wife, and she gives birth to sons or daughters while her husband is a slave, you only have to free the man.
His wife and children will continue to be slaves of their master. **5**But when it is time for you to free the slave if he
clearly states: ‘I love my master and my wife and my children, and I do not want to go free,’ **6**then his master must
take him to the place where they worship God. There he must make the slave stand against the door or the
doorpost. Then the master will use an awl to make a hole in the slave’s ear and he will own that slave for the rest of
his life.

7If a man sells his daughter to become a slave, she should not go free like the male slaves. **8**If the man who bought
her wanted her to be his concubine, but later he is not pleased with her, he must sell her back to her father. He
must not sell her to a foreigner, because that was not what he and the girl’s father agreed to. **9**If the man who buys
her wants her to be a wife for his son, he must then treat her as though she were his own daughter. **10**If the master
marries another woman, he must continue to give the first woman the same amount of food, clothing, and sexual
attention that he gave to her before. **11**If he does not do these three things for her, he must free her from being a
slave, and she is not required to pay anything to go free.

12If someone hits a man in order to kill him and the man dies, then you absolutely must execute the murderer;
13but if he did not plan the murder—if God allowed the accident—the one who hit him can escape to a place that I
will choose for you, and he will be safe there. **14**But if someone gets angry with another person and kills him on
purpose, you must kill the murderer even if he runs to God’s altar.

15You must kill anyone who strikes his father or mother.

16You must kill anyone who kidnaps another person, whether he sold the person or you found him still with the
kidnapper.

17You must kill anyone who curses or insults his father or his mother.

18Suppose two people fight, and one hits the other with a stone or his fist. Suppose the person he strikes does not
die but is injured and has to stay in bed for a while, **19**but later he is able to walk outside using a cane. Then they
must not punish the person who hit him, except that they must make him pay the injured person the money he
could not earn while he was recovering as well as the costs for healing.

20If someone hits his male or female slave with a stick, and if the slave dies from the blow, then you must avenge
the slave’s death. **21**But if the slave recovers after a few days, you must not punish the one who hit him, because
the slave was his property.

22If some men are fighting, and they hit a pregnant woman so that she gives birth, but she and the baby are unharmed, whoever hit her must pay a fine. He must pay whatever the woman's husband asks after a judge approves of the fine. **23**But if he harmed anyone {you must punish him by causing the same harm to him}. If he killed someone, you must kill him. **24**{In the same way, if he harmed} an eye, a tooth, a hand, or a foot, **25**or caused a burn, a wound, or a bruise—{you must cause the same harm to him}.

26If the owner of a slave strikes the eye of his male or female slave and that eye becomes blind, then he must free that slave because of what he did to the slave's eye. **27**If someone knocks out one of his slave's teeth, he must free the slave because of what he did to the slave's tooth.

28If a bull gores a man or woman with the result that the person dies, you must kill the bull by throwing stones at it, but do not eat it. The owner of the bull is not guilty. **29**But if the bull had attacked people several times before and if people had told its owner about that, but he did not keep the bull inside a fence, and it kills a man or woman by goring, then you must kill the bull by throwing stones at it, and you must also kill its owner. **30**However, if {the family of the dead} chooses to demand compensation instead, to save his life he must pay the full amount they demand. **31**If someone's bull attacks and gores someone's son or daughter, you must treat the bull's owner according to that same rule. **32**If a bull attacks and gores a male or female slave, its owner must pay to the slave's owner thirty pieces of silver, and you must kill the bull by throwing stones at it.

33Suppose someone uncovers a hole for storing water or digs one and does not cover it. If someone's bull or donkey falls into it {and dies}, **34**the owner of the pit must give the animal's owner as much money as the animal was worth, but then he will own the dead animal.

35If someone's bull hurts another person's bull, so that it dies, the owners of both bulls must sell the bull that is living, and they must divide between them the money that they get for it. They must also divide between them the meat of the animal that died. **36**However, if the owner knew that the bull often attacked other animals before, and he did not secure it, then the owner of that bull must give the owner of the bull that died a living bull, but then he will own the dead animal.

Chapter 22

1If someone steals a bull or a sheep and then kills it or sells it, he must give the owner five bulls or cows for the bull that he stole, and he must give the owner four sheep or goats for the sheep that he stole.

2If someone finds a thief breaking into his house {at night} and hits him and the thief dies, he is not guilty of murder. **3**But if that happens during the daytime, the one who killed the thief is guilty of murdering him.

A thief must pay for what he stole. If he has nothing with which to pay for what he stole, the judges must sell him to become a slave, and the money from his sale will pay for what he stole. **4**In a case where you catch a thief and he still has the stolen goods, if it is a bull or a donkey or a sheep, and it is still alive, the thief must pay back the stolen animal as well as another one of the same kind.

5If someone puts his animals in his field or in his vineyard to eat, and he allows the to animals stray away and eat the plants in another person's field, the owner of the animals must pay the owner of that field by giving him the best from his own field or vineyard.

6If someone starts a fire, and it spreads through the grass and starts burning in someone else's field, and the fire burns grain that is growing or grain that is already cut and stacked, then the person who started the fire must pay for the grain that the fire destroyed.

7Suppose that someone gives another person some money or other items and asks him to keep it in his house for a while. And suppose that a thief steals it from that person's house. If you catch the thief, the thief must pay back

twice as much as he stole. **8**But if no one catches the thief, you must bring the owner of the house to God so he {can swear} that he did not take his neighbor's property. **9**Whenever someone claims his neighbor wronged him and says, 'This is actually mine,' about a bull, a donkey, a sheep, clothing, or something else he lost, they must both come and stand before God. The one whom God says is wrong must pay back the owner twice as much as he took.

10Suppose someone gives his donkey or bull or sheep or some other animal to someone else and asks him to take care of it for a while. However, the animal dies, or something injures it or takes it away while no one is watching. **11**Then the person who was taking care of the animal must swear, knowing that Yahweh is listening, that he did not steal the item. The owner of the animal must accept that the other person is telling the truth, and the other person will not have to pay anything back to the owner. **12**But if someone stole the animal while he was supposed to be taking care of it, the man who promised to take care of it must pay back the owner for the animal. **13**If wild animals mauled the animal, he must bring back its remains to prove that what he says is true. If he does that, he will not have to pay anything for the mauled animal.

14If someone borrows an animal from his neighbor, and if something hurts or kills that animal when its owner is not there, the one who borrowed it must pay the owner for the animal. **15**But if that happens when the owner of the animal is there, the one who borrowed it will not have to pay back anything. If someone rented it, the money that he paid to rent it will be enough to pay for the animal dying or for an injury.

16If a man tricks a virgin girl whose {father} has not yet promised her to be anyone's bride into having sexual intercourse with him, he must pay the bride price for her and marry her. **17**But if her father does not allow her to marry him, he must still pay the girl's father as much money as men pay to marry a virgin.

18You must kill any woman who practices sorcery.

19You must kill any person who has sexual intercourse with an animal.

20You must kill anyone who offers a sacrifice to any god other than Yahweh.

21You must not abuse or subjugate foreigners, because you were foreigners in Egypt.

22You must not mistreat any widow or any orphan. **23**If you mistreat them and they ask me to help them, I will help them. **24**Because I will be angry with you, I will cause you to die in war. Your wives will become widows, and your children will become orphans.

25If you lend money to any of my people who are poor, do not act like a moneylender by requiring him to pay interest on the money. **26**If you make him give you his cloak to guarantee that he will pay the money back, you must give the cloak back to him before the sun goes down, **27**because his cloak is the only thing he has to cover his body when he sleeps. When he complains about you to me, I will help him because I am merciful.

28Do not insult God, and do not call on God to do harmful things to any ruler of your people.

29Do not withhold from me the best parts of the grain that you harvest or of the olive oil or the wine that you produce.

You will give your firstborn sons to me. **30**Similarly, your firstborn male cattle and sheep belong to me. After those animals are born, allow them to stay with their mothers for seven days. On the eighth day you will give them to me.

31You are my set apart people, so do not eat any meat from any animal that a wild animal killed. Instead, throw it where the dogs can eat it.

Chapter 23

[1]Do not speak falsely in court. Do not help an evil man by testifying maliciously. [2]Do not join a group of people who are planning to do something evil. Do not tell the same lies they do and so keep the judge from deciding the case justly. [3]Do not prefer someone in court just because he is poor.

[4]If you see someone's bull or donkey when it is wandering away loose, take it back to its owner even if the owner is your enemy. [5]If you see someone's donkey that has fallen down because of its heavy load, help the owner to get the donkey up again even if he is someone who hates you. Do not just walk away without helping him.

[6]Decide the cases of poor people who are on trial as fairly as you judge the cases of other people. [7]Do not deceive others. Do not kill guiltless or upright people, because I will not say that evil people are good. [8]Do not accept a bribe, because good judges who take bribes do not judge wisely, and they unfairly judge against the person who is right.

[9]Do not mistreat foreigners who live among you. You know how foreigners often feel, because you lived as foreigners in Egypt.

[10]For six years, plant seeds in your ground and gather the harvest. [11]But in the seventh year you must leave the ground fallow. Allow your poor countrymen to eat {what grows on its own}. Whatever is left over is for the wild animals to eat. Do the same thing with your grapevine and your olive trees.

[12]You may work for six days each week, but on the seventh day you must rest and not work. Do this so that your ox and donkey may rest. The rest day will also let your slaves and the foreigners who live among you recuperate.

[13]Make certain that you obey everything that I have commanded you to do. Do not pray to other gods. Do not even mention their names.

[14]Every year you must travel to three celebrations to honor me:

[15]Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread the way that I commanded you: eat unleavened bread for seven days in the month called Aviv. I set this time because it is the month when you left Egypt. Always bring me an offering when you come to worship me.

[16]{The second celebration is the Spring} Harvest Celebration. {During that celebration you must offer to me} the first parts of your crops that grow from the seeds that you planted.

{The third celebration is} the Finished Harvest Celebration. That will be at the end of the year, after you finish harvesting everything you planted.

[17]These three times every year, all the men must gather together to worship me, the Lord Yahweh.

[18]Do not sacrifice bread you made with yeast along with blood from an animal sacrifice. Do not keep the fat from the animals you sacrificed at my celebration until the next morning. {Burn it completely.} [19]{Each year, when you harvest your crops,} take the best of what you harvest first, go to the place where you worship me, and give it to me, Yahweh your God. {When you kill} a young animal, do not cook it by boiling it in its mother's milk.

[20]Look! I am going to send an angel ahead of you to guard you as you travel and to lead you to the place that I have made ready for you. [21]Respect and obey him. Do not make him angry, because he will not forgive your sin, because my authority and presence is in him. [22]But if you obey his commands well and if you do all that I tell you to do, I will fight against all of your enemies and adversaries. [23]Then my angel will go ahead of you and will take you to where the Amor, Heth, Periz, Canaan, Hiv, and Jebus people groups live, and I will completely get rid of them. [24]Do not bow down before their gods or worship them. Do not do the things that they {think that their gods want them to} do. Instead, destroy {their gods} and smash to pieces their sacred stones.

25You must worship me, Yahweh your God. If you do that, I will bless your food and water, and I will protect you
from becoming sick. **26**No women in your land will have miscarriages, and no women will be unable to become
pregnant. I will enable you to live a long time.

27{I will go} ahead of you and terrify and confuse all the people into whose {lands} you are going. {When you fight}
your enemies, I will make them run away from you. **28**I will send wasps ahead of you who will drive the Hiv, Canaan,
and Heth people groups from your land. **29**I will not remove all of them in less than one year. If I did that, your land
would become deserted, and there would be very many wild animals that would attack you. **30**I will remove those
people groups slowly, a few at a time, until the number of your people increases and you are able to live
everywhere in the land. **31**I will make your country's borders be from the Sea of Reeds {in the southeast} to the sea
by the Philistines {in the northwest}, and from the wilderness {in the southwest} to the {Euphrates} River {in the
northeast of the country}. I will give you the power to remove the people who live there, so that you will remove
them as you occupy more of the country.

32You must not make any agreement with those people or with their gods. **33**Do not allow those people to live in
your land, so they do not cause you to sin against me by enticing you to worship their gods."

Chapter 24

1Then Yahweh said to Moses. "Come up to me {on top of this mountain}, you and Aaron and {his sons} Nadab and
Abihu. Also take along seventy of the Israelite elders. You will all worship me at an {appropriate} distance. **2**Moses,
you will come near to me alone. The others must not come near, and the rest of the people must not come up the
mountain with you."

3Moses went and told the people everything that Yahweh had said and all that he had commanded. The people all
replied together, saying, "We will do everything that Yahweh has told us to do." **4**Then Moses wrote down
everything that Yahweh had commanded. Moses woke early the next morning and built an altar at the bottom of
the mountain. He also set up twelve stones, one for each of the Israelite tribes. **5**Then he sent some young Israelite
men to burn sacrifices to Yahweh and to sacrifice some bulls as offerings to promise friendship with Yahweh.
6Moses took half of the blood of the animals that they slaughtered and put it in bowls. The other half of the blood
he threw against the altar. **7**Then he loudly read the scroll on which he had written everything that Yahweh and the
people were promising each other so all the people could hear it. Then all the people said, "We will do everything
that Yahweh has told us to do. We will obey everything."

8Then Moses took the blood {that was in the bowls} and threw it on the people. He said, "This is the blood that
confirms what Yahweh is agreeing with you—what you just heard and agreed to."

9Then Moses and Aaron along with Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy Israelite elders went up {the mountain}, **10**and
they saw God, the one whom the Israelites worship. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of blue
stones called sapphires. They were as clear as the sky is when there are no clouds. **11**God did not harm those
Israelite elders {even though they saw him}. They saw God, and they ate and drank together.

12Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Come up to me on top of this mountain and wait there. I will give you stone slabs,
my law, and my commandments, all of which I have written so that you may teach them to the people."

13Then Moses started out with his assistant Joshua. He went {part of the way} up the mountain where God was.
14Moses told the elders, "Stay here until we return. Do not forget that Aaron and Hur will be with you, so if anyone
disputes {with his neighbor while I am gone}, he can go to them {and they will judge it}."

15Then Moses went {the rest of the way} up the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. **16**Yahweh's glory
came down onto the mountain and the cloud covered it for six days. On the seventh day, Yahweh called to Moses
from the middle of the cloud. **17**To the Israelites, Yahweh's glory looked like a fire consuming the top of the
mountain. **18**Moses went into the cloud on top of the mountain and was there for 40 days and nights.

Chapter 25

[1]Yahweh said to Moses, [2]"Tell the Israelites that everyone who wants to may give a gift to me. You will receive their gifts for me. [3]These are the types of gifts that you should collect from them: gold, silver, bronze, [4]{cloth dyed} blue, {cloth dyed} purple, {cloth dyed} bright red, fine linen, {cloth made from} goats' hair, [5]red ram skins, fine leather hides, the hard wood from acacia trees, [6]{olive} oil to burn in the lamps, spices to mix with the {olive} oil for anointing {the priests}, and spices to mix into the sweet-smelling incense, [7]onyx stones and other expensive stones for fastening to the priest's sacred apron and for putting on the chest pouch that attaches to the apron.

[8]The people should make a holy place for me so that I can live in it among them. [9]They must make my pavilion and all the things that they will use inside it precisely according to the plan that I will show you.

[10]Have the people make a sacred chest from acacia wood. They should make it 125 centimeters long, 75 centimeters wide and 75 centimeters high. [11]Cover the chest with pure gold inside and outside and put a gold molding all around it. [12]Make four rings from gold, and fasten them to the four legs of the chest. Put two of the rings on each side of the chest. [13]Make two poles from acacia wood, and cover them with gold. [14]Put the poles into the rings on the sides of the chest so that {the Levites} can carry the chest by the poles. [15]Always leave the poles in the chest's rings; do not take the poles out of the rings. [16]Put the stone slabs, which I am giving you and on which I wrote my commands, inside the chest.

[17]You must make a lid for the chest from pure gold. It will be 125 centimeters long and 75 centimeters wide. [18]Hammer the gold at both ends of the lid into the form of two creatures that have wings. [19]Make the winged creatures {from the gold} at each end of the sacred chest's lid, one at one end and the other at the other end. [20]The creature's wings should spread out and reach up to cover the lid. They should face each other, facing the chest's lid that is between them. [21]Put the stone slabs that I am giving you inside the sacred chest. Then place the lid onto the top of the chest. [22]I will set times to talk with you there. I will tell to you all my commands that you must command the Israelites from above the sacred chest's lid, between the two winged creatures which are above the sacred chest that contains my law tablets.

[23]Make a table from acacia wood. It is to be one meter long, one-half of a meter wide, and three-quarters of a meter high. [24]Cover the table with pure gold and put a gold molding all around it. [25]Make a rim all around it, eight centimeters wide, and make a gold molding around the rim. [26]Make four rings from gold. Fasten them to the four corners of the table. Each ring should be close to each table leg [27]near the rim. They are to hold poles for carrying the table. [28]Make two poles from acacia wood and cover them with gold. Use them to carry the table. [29]Also make dishes, cups, jars, and bowls for the priests to use to pour out {wine to offer to me}. Make them all from pure gold. [30]Present the sacred bread to me on the table at all times.

[31]Make a lampstand from pure gold. Hammer {one large lump of gold} to make its base and its shaft. Make the cups, with the flower buds and petals {that decorate them}, from that same lump. [32]There are to be six branches on the lampstand, three on each side of the shaft. [33]Each branch will have three gold cups that look like almond flowers on it. The flowers will have buds and petals. Do this for all six branches of the lampstand. [34]On {the shaft of} the lampstand there are to be four cups that also look like almond blossoms, each one with flower buds and petals. [35]Make one flower bud beneath every two branches. Attach it to each pair of branches {as if they are growing} from it. Make all six lampstand branches like this. [36]Hammer all these buds and branches{, along with the shaft,} from one {large lump} of pure gold. [37]Make seven lamps and place them on the lampstand so that its light shines all around it. [38]{Make} tongs from pure gold, {to remove the burned wicks} and trays {in which to put the burned wicks}. [39]Use 33 kilograms of pure gold to make the lampstand, the tongs, and the trays.

[40]Make sure to make {these things} according to the instructions that I am giving you here on this mountain.

Chapter 26

1As for the sacred tent, make it using ten long hangings of finely twisted linen. A skilled craftsman must take blue, purple, and red thread, and embroider these hangings with designs that represent the winged creatures that are above the chest. **2**Make each hanging 14. 5 meters long and two meters wide. Make them all the same size. **3**Sew five hangings together {as one set}, and sew the other five hangings together {as another set}. **4**For each set, make loops of blue cloth and fasten them along the outer edge of the hanging, at the end of each set. **5**Put 50 loops on the edge of the first set, and 50 loops at the edge of the second set so that the loops are opposite to each other. **6**Make 50 gold fasteners and fasten both of the sets together with them to make the sacred tent one unit.

7Make a cover for the sacred tent from 11 pieces of cloth made from goats' hair. **8**Each of the 11 pieces of cloth will be the same dimensions: 15 meters long and two meters wide. **9**Sew five of these pieces of cloth together {to make one set}, and sew the other six pieces of cloth together {to make another set}. Fold the sixth piece of cloth in half to make it double over the front of the cover. **10**Make {100 loops of blue cloth,} and fasten 50 of them to the outer edge of the one set and fasten 50 to the outer edge of the other set. **11**Make 50 bronze hooks and fasten the hooks to the loops to connect them, so the cover will be one unit. **12**Let the extra part of the tent cover, the half piece that extends beyond the linen cloth, hang over the back side of the sacred tent. **13**The extra half-meter of cover on each side, the part that extends beyond the linen cloth, must hang over the two sides of the sacred tent to protect the sides. **14**Make another cover to go over the tent from red rams' skins, and a top cover from fine leather hides.

15Make a standing framework from acacia wood for the sacred tent. **16**Each frame is to be five meters long and three-quarters of a meter wide. **17**Make two pegs {at the bottom of} each frame to fasten them together. Make each frame for the tabernacle this way. **18**Make 20 frames for the south side of the sacred tent. **19**Make 40 silver bases to go underneath the 20 frames. Put two bases under each frame and fit their two pegs into the bases. **20**For the other side—{that is,} the north side—of the sacred tent {make} 20 frames **21**and 40 silver bases for them. {Put} two bases under each frame. **22**For the rear of the sacred tent, on the west side, make six frames. **23**Make two frames for the rear corners of the sacred tent. **24**Match them to each other at the bottom and top. Secure the tops together with a ring. Do this for both, making them the corner pieces. **25**Make eight frames and 16 silver bases, two bases under each frame.

26Make crossbars from acacia wood. Make five crossbars for the frames on the {north} side of the sacred tent, **27**five crossbars for the frames on the {south} side of the sacred tent, and five crossbars for the frames at the rear of the sacred tent, the west side. **28**The center crossbar, right in the middle of the frames, will reach all the way from edge to edge. **29**Cover the frames and crossbars with gold. Make the rings for fastening the crossbars to the frames from gold. **30**Build the sacred tent in the way that I have shown you here on this mountain.

31Make a curtain from fine linen. A skilled craftsman must embroider it with blue, purple, and red yarn, making designs to represent the winged creatures that are above the sacred chest. **32**Suspend the curtain from gold hooks on four gold-covered posts made from acacia wood. Set each post in a silver base. **33**Suspend the curtain from fasteners {attached to the roof of the sacred tent}. Put the sacred chest behind the curtain. The curtain will separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. **34**Put the lid on top of the sacred chest in the Most Holy Place. **35**Put the table and the lampstand on the other side of the curtain on opposite sides from each other. Put the lampstand on the south side of the sacred tent, and put the table for the sacred bread on the north side. **36**Make a curtain as the tent entrance. A skilled weaver must make it from fine linen with blue, purple, and red yarn. **37**To hold up this curtain, make five posts from acacia wood. Cover them with gold and fasten gold clasps to them. Also make a bronze base for each of these posts.

Chapter 27

[1]Make an altar from acacia wood. Make it square: two and a half meters long on each side and one and a half meters tall. [2]Make a {projection that looks like a} horn on each of the top corners. Make them from the same block of wood as the altar. Cover the whole altar with bronze. [3]Make all its implements from bronze. Make pans to collect the ashes from burning the fat, shovels {for cleaning out the ashes}, basins, forks {for turning the meat as it cooks}, and buckets {for carrying hot coals}. [4]Make a bronze lattice grating {to hold the wood and burning coals}. Fasten a bronze ring to each of the four corners of the grate. [5]Put the grating under the rim that is around the altar. Make it so that it is inside the altar, halfway down. [6]Make poles for {carrying} the altar from acacia wood and cover them with bronze. [7]Put the poles through the rings on each side of the altar to carry it. [8]Make the altar from boards and make it hollow in the middle. They must make it according to these instructions that I am giving you here on this mountain.

[9]Also make a courtyard around the sacred tent with more curtains of fine linen. For the south side, hang 50 meters of curtain [10]from 20 {bronze} posts. {Make} 20 bronze bases for the posts and hooks on them and silver connectors. [11]And likewise for the north side {of the courtyard: hang} 50 meters of curtains from 20 posts, with their 20 bronze bases, hooks, and silver connectors. [12]{Make} a curtain 25 meters long along the west side of the courtyard. {Support them} with ten posts, with a base under each post. [13]On the east side the courtyard must also be 25 meters wide. [14]{Make} a curtain seven and a half meters long for one side {of the entrance}, with three posts and bases. [15]{Make} another curtain seven and a half meters long for the other side {of the entrance}, also with three posts and bases. [16]{Make} a curtain from finely twined linen ten meters wide for the courtyard entrance. A skilled weaver must embroider it with blue, purple, and red yarn. {Hang it} from four posts, each one with a base under it. [17]Put silver bands around all of the posts of the courtyard. Make the clasps from silver, and the bases from bronze. [18]Make the whole courtyard, {from the east entrance to the west end}, 50 meters long and 25 meters wide, and {the curtains that enclose it} two and a half meters high. Make all the curtains from fine linen, and all the bases {under the posts} from bronze. [19]Make all the things {that are not made of gold} that are for use inside the sacred tent {and in the courtyard}, and all the tent pegs to support the sacred tent and the curtains that form the courtyard from bronze.

[20]Command the Israelites to bring you purified oil squeezed from olives, so that the lamp is always burning. [21]In the outer part of the sacred tent, outside the curtain where the sacred chest is, Aaron and his sons must take care to keep the lamps burning every night from evening to morning for Yahweh. The Israelites must obey this regulation throughout all future generations.

Chapter 28

[1]Have your older brother Aaron and his sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar, come close to you and away from the Israelites, so they can be my priests. [2]Make holy vestments for your brother Aaron, so {he reflects my} honor and beauty. [3]Talk to all the skilled artisans, those whom I have made excellent at crafting things. Tell them to make vestments for Aaron to wear when you dedicate him to become a priest to serve me. [4]They should make these vestments: a sacred pouch {for Aaron to wear over his breast}, a sacred apron, a robe, an embroidered tunic, a turban, and a waistband. They must make these holy vestments so that your older brother Aaron and his sons can {wear them as they} serve me by doing the work that priests do. [5]The skilled workmen should receive fine linen and gold, blue, purple, and red thread {to make the vestments}.

[6]The skilled workmen must make the sacred apron from finely twisted linen. They must skillfully embroider it with blue, purple, and red thread, and with {fine} gold {thread}. [7]It must have two shoulder straps attached on both edges to connect it together. [8]Make a carefully woven belt that matches the sacred apron. Make it from the same piece of cloth as the apron. (That cloth was finely twisted linen with {skillfully embroidered} blue, purple, red thread, and {fine} gold {thread}.) Sew it onto the apron.

9Take two onyx stones and carve Jacob's {12} sons' names on them. **10**{Carve the names} in the order in which Jacob's sons were born. {Carve} six names on one stone and the other six names on the other stone. **11**A gem cutter should carve these names in the two stones like he is making a signet ring. Then he should mount the stones in decorative gold settings. **12**Fasten the memorial stones onto the shoulder straps of the sacred apron. Then Aaron will memorialize the names of the 12 tribes of Israel by carrying them on his shoulders whenever he serves Yahweh. **13**Make the decorative settings for the stones from gold. **14**Make two chains of purified gold by braiding gold like cords and fasten the cord chains to the decorative settings.

15Make a sacred pouch for decision-making. Make it of the same materials as the sacred apron, and skillfully embroider it in the same way with gold, blue, purple, and red finely twisted linen. **16**Fold the material double so that it is a square 23 centimeters long and 23 centimeters wide. **17**Fasten four rows of valuable stones onto the pouch. In the first row, put a red ruby, a yellow topaz, and a green emerald. **18**Put a green turquoise, a blue sapphire, and a clear diamond in the second row. **19**Put a red jacinth, a white agate, and a purple amethyst in the third row. **20**Put a yellow beryl, an onyx, and a green jasper in the fourth row. Mount all these stones in decorative gold settings. **21**{A gem cutter should carve} the name of one of the 12 sons of Jacob into each of these stones like he is making signet rings. These name-stones will represent the 12 tribes of Israel.

22Attach two chains that they made from purified gold and braided like cords to the sacred pouch. **23**Make two gold rings for the sacred pouch and attach them to the pouch's {upper} corners. **24**Fasten one end of each gold cord to one of the rings on the top corner of the pouch. **25**Fasten the other end of each cord to the two decorative settings that enclose the stones. Then put those on the front side of the shoulder straps of the sacred apron. **26**Make two more gold rings and attach them to the lower corners of the sacred pouch on the inside edges next to the sacred apron. **27**Make two more gold rings and attach them to the lower part of the front of the shoulder straps near where the shoulder straps join the sacred apron just above the sash. **28**Tie the rings on the sacred pouch to the rings on the sacred apron with a blue cord so that the sacred pouch is above the sash and does not come loose from the sacred apron.

29Therefore, whenever he enters the Holy Place where Yahweh is, Aaron will continually memorialize the names of the 12 tribes of Israel by carrying them close to his chest, in the sacred pouch for making decisions. **30**Put the {things called} Urim and Thummim into the sacred pouch that he uses to know how I judged. In that way, they will be close to his chest when Aaron comes to talk to me. Aaron must always wear the items that reveal how I judge the Israelites on his chest when he meets with me.

31Make the robe {that Aaron will wear underneath his} sacred apron from only blue material. **32**Make an opening in the middle through which the priest can put his head. Weave a reinforced border around this opening to keep the collar from tearing. **33**All around the lower edge on the robe, fasten {decorations that look like} pomegranate fruit. Make them from blue, purple, and red yarn. Also {hang} gold bells in between the pomegranates. **34**{So the pattern will be} one gold bell and then one pomegranate {and then repeat} all the way around the bottom of the robe. **35**Whenever Aaron enters or leaves my presence in the Holy Place in the sacred tent for his priestly ministry, he must wear the robe. I will hear the bells, and he will not die.

36Make a decoration from purified gold and carve into it the words, 'Dedicated to Yahweh,' just like carving a signet ring. **37**Fasten this ornament to the front of the turban by a blue cord. **38**Aaron must always wear the turban on his forehead so that I will accept the things that the Israelites dedicate to me. If there is anything wrong with anything they dedicate to me, Aaron will be guilty instead of the people.

39Weave the long-sleeved tunic from fine linen. Also make the turban from fine linen. A skilled weaver must make the waistband. **40**Make long-sleeved tunics, waistbands, and caps for Aaron's sons so {they reflect my} honor and beauty. **41**Put these clothes on your older brother Aaron and on his sons. Then consecrate them and authorize them to be my priests by anointing them {with olive oil}.

42Make linen undershorts for them. The undershorts should extend from their waists to their thighs in order that no one can see their genitalia. **43**Aaron and his sons must always wear those undershorts when they enter the

sacred tent or when they come near to the altar to offer sacrifices in the Holy Place. In this way, they will not be guilty, and they will not die.

Aaron and all his male descendants must obey this rule forever.

Chapter 29

1Do the following things to dedicate Aaron and his sons to serve me by being priests. Select one young bull and two rams that do not have any defects. **2**Also, using finely ground wheat flour, bake these all without yeast: {plain} bread, soft bread with olive oil in it, and thin wafers with oil on the outside. **3**Put them in a basket. Bring the basket with the bread in it, the young bull, and the two rams {to me}. **4**Take Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the sacred tent and wash them with water. **5**Then put the vestments on Aaron—the long-sleeved tunic, the robe under the sacred apron, the sacred apron, and the sacred pouch. Tie the sacred apron onto him with its sash. **6**Put the turban on his head, and fasten to the turban the sacred ornament {that has the words 'Dedicated to Yahweh' engraved on it}. **7**Then take the anointing oil and pour some on his head to dedicate him. **8**Then bring his sons and put the long-sleeved tunics on them. **9**Tie the sashes around Aaron and his sons' waists and secure the caps on their heads. This is an eternal law: they are the priests. You will authorize them for this.

10Then bring the young bull to the front of the sacred tent. While Aaron and his sons put their hands on the head of the young bull, **11**sacrifice the young bull {by slitting its throat} before Yahweh {outside} the entrance to the sacred tent {and catch the blood in a bowl}. **12**Take some of that blood with your finger and smear it on the projections of the altar. Pour the rest of the blood at the bottom of the altar. **13**Take all the fat that covers the inner organs of the young bull, the fatty covering of the liver, and both kidneys with the fat on them. Burn all these on the altar until they are completely gone. **14**But you must burn the meat of the young bull and its hide and intestines on a fire outside the camp. {Sacrificing} the bull purifies {the altar}.

15Select one of the rams. While Aaron and his sons put their hands on its head, **16**kill the ram {by slitting its throat}. Catch the blood and sprinkle it all over the altar. **17**Then cut the ram into pieces. Wash its inner organs and its legs, and put those with the head and the rest of the body parts **18**on the altar. Then completely burn it all. That will be a burnt offering to me, Yahweh, and the fire's smell will please me.

19Take the other ram. While Aaron and his sons put their hands on its head, **20**kill the ram {by slitting its throat}. Catch the blood. Smear some of the blood on the bottom portion of Aaron's and his sons' right ears, on their right thumbs, and on the big toes on their right feet. Throw the rest of the blood against the four sides of the altar. **21**Wipe up some of the blood that is on the altar, mix it with some of the oil for anointing, and sprinkle it on Aaron and his clothes, and on his sons and their clothes. By doing this, you will dedicate them and their clothes to me.

22Also, cut off the ram's fat: its fat tail, and the fat that covers the inner organs, the fatty covering of the liver, the two kidneys with the fat on them, and the right thigh. (This ram is for making holy {Aaron and his sons, who will be my priests}.) **23**Finally, from the basket of bread that they baked without yeast (the one that you brought to me), take a {plain} round loaf, a piece of soft bread with oil in it, and a thin wafer {with oil on the outside}. **24**Put all these things into the hands of Aaron and his sons. Then tell them to lift them up high to dedicate them to me. **25**Then take them from their hands and completely burn them on the altar, on top of the burnt offering. That also will be a fire offering to me, and its smell will please me. **26**Then take the breast of the ram for making Aaron holy and lift it up high to dedicate it to me. But then this part of the animal will be for you to eat. **27**Set these apart from the ram for making holy {Aaron and his sons as my priests}: the breast that you lifted high to dedicate to me and the thigh that you presented to me. These are for Aaron and his sons. **28**This custom will continue forever. Whenever the Israelites bring offerings to show they are friends with me, the breast and the thigh of animals that they present to me will be for Aaron and his male descendants to eat.

29After Aaron {dies}, the sacred vestments that he wore will belong to his male descendants. They will wear them when {a leader} anoints them to authorize them to be priests. **30**Aaron's descendant who becomes high priest after him and enters the sacred tent and performs rituals in the Holy Place must wear these vestments for seven days.

31Take the breast and thigh of the ram that they sacrificed to make Aaron and his sons holy, and boil it in a location set aside for that. **32**{After it is cooked,} Aaron and his sons must eat the meat, along with the bread that is left in the basket, at the entrance to the sacred tent. **33**They will eat these things from the offering that made them holy by covering their sins when they became priests. But no one else can eat these things, because they are reserved for the priests. **34**If any of the holy meat or bread is left over in the morning, you must completely burn it. Do not eat any of it, because it is sacred.

35Do all this to Aaron and his sons just as I have told you. You will prepare them for seven days. **36**Sacrifice a {young} bull to purify {the altar} each of those days. That will ceremonially cleanse the altar by covering the altar's imperfections. You must also pour {olive oil} over the altar to dedicate it {to Yahweh}. **37**After you cover the altar for seven days you will have made it holy. It will be so very holy that it will make anything that touches it holy too.

38You must also perpetually sacrifice two one-year-old lambs per day on the altar. **39**You must sacrifice one lamb in the morning and the other around twilight. **40**With the first lamb, also {offer} two liters of finely ground wheat flour mixed with a liter of the best kind of olive oil, and one liter of wine as a drink-offering. **41**In the evening, when you sacrifice the other lamb, offer the same amounts of flour, olive oil, and wine as you did in the morning. This will be an offering to me, Yahweh, that they will burn, and its smell will please me.

42You and your descendants must continue making these offerings to me, Yahweh, throughout all future generations. You must offer them at the entrance to the sacred tent. That is where I will meet with you and speak to you. **43**That is where I will meet with the Israelites, and the brilliant light of my presence will cause that place to be holy. **44**I will dedicate the sacred tent and the altar. I will also dedicate Aaron and his sons to be my priests. **45**I will live with the Israelites, and I will be their God. **46**They will know that I, Yahweh their God, am the one who brought them out of Egypt in order that I might live among them. I am Yahweh, the God whom they worship.

Chapter 30

1Make an altar from acacia wood for burning incense. **2**It is to be square, one-half meter on each side. It is to be one meter high. Make {projections that look like} horns on the same block of wood as the altar. **3**Cover the top and the four sides, including the projections, with pure gold. Put a gold molding all around it. **4**Make two gold rings and attach them to the altar below the molding, one on each side of the altar. These rings are to hold the poles for carrying the altar. **5**Make these two poles from acacia wood and cover them with gold. **6**Put this incense altar outside the curtain that hangs in front of the sacred chest. (The chest that has a lid covering the stone slabs, where I will talk with you.)

7Aaron must burn sweet-smelling incense on this altar. He must burn some every morning when he takes care of the lamps, **8**and he must burn some in the evening when he lights the lamps. Always keep incense burning for me throughout all future generations. **9**Do not burn on the altar any incense that I have not told you to burn, or burn any animal on it, or any flour offering for me, nor pour any wine on it as an offering. **10**Once a year, Aaron must take the purifying blood from the annual sacrifice that covers up the bad things people do and put it on the projections on the altar to cover the altar's flaws. {Each high priest} will cover the altar's flaws{this way} throughout all future generations. The altar will be very holy, dedicated to me, Yahweh."

11Yahweh said to Moses, **12**"Whenever {your leaders} count to find out how many Israelites there are, each man who {they} count must pay a price to me to save his life. This is so I do not cause the people to become sick and die when {the leaders} count them. **13**When a man walks by a leader so he can count him he must pay {silver} that weighs half of a standard weight. (Use the official tabernacle weight standard, which is about 11 grams.) This half-weight {of silver} is an offering to me, Yahweh. **14**Every man who is at least 20 years old must pay this amount to

me, Yahweh, when he walks by a leader so the leader can count him. **15**Rich men must not pay more than this amount, and poor men must not pay less than this amount when they pay this money to me, Yahweh, to save their lives. **16**Take the life-saving money from the Israelites and use it for work on the sacred tent. It will remind me, Yahweh, that the Israelites have paid money to save their lives."

17Yahweh said to Moses, **18**"Make a bronze washbasin and a bronze base for it. Put it between the sacred tent and the altar and fill it with water. **19**Aaron and his sons must wash their hands and their feet in the basin. **20**They must wash with water before they enter the sacred tent so they will not die. Before they come to the altar to burn offerings as sacrifices to me, Yahweh, **21**they must wash their hands and their feet so that they will not die. This will be a ritual for them and every generation of men descended from Aaron for all time."

22Yahweh said to Moses, **23**"Collect to yourself some of the finest spices—six kilograms of liquid myrrh, and then half that much: three kilograms of sweet-smelling cinnamon, three kilograms of a sweet-smelling cane, **24**and six kilograms of cassia. {Weigh everything} according to the tabernacle standard. Also, {collect} four liters of olive oil. **25**Make a sacred oil for anointing with these ingredients. A perfume mixer must mix this mixed perfume. It will be a sacred oil for anointing. **26**Use this oil to anoint the sacred tent, the sacred chest, **27**the table and all the things that the priests use with it, the lampstand and all the things that the priests use to take care of it, the altar for burning incense, **28**and the altar for burning sacrifices, and all the things that the priests use with it, and the washbasin and its base. **29**{In that way,} you will dedicate those items to me. They will be so very holy that they will make anything that touches them holy too.

30Dedicate Aaron and his sons to be my priests by anointing them. **31**Tell the Israelites, 'This oil will be my sacred oil for anointing throughout all future generations. **32**You must not pour it on the bodies of people {who are not priests}, and you must not make other oil to be like it by mixing those same things. This oil is reserved for me, and you must consider it sacred. **33**You must drive out from Israel anyone who makes a perfume like this or who puts it on anyone who is not a priest.'"

34Yahweh also said to Moses, "Collect equal parts of several sweet spices: stacte, onycha, galbanum, and pure frankincense. **35**A perfume mixer must mix these, along with salt, into a perfumed incense. It will be clean and sacred. **36**Beat some of it into a fine powder. Then take some of it into the sacred tent and set it in front of the sacred chest where I meet you. You all must consider this incense to be very sacred. **37**The people must not mix the same spices to make this incense for themselves. They must consider this incense sacred, only for me, Yahweh. **38**You must drive out from Israel anyone who makes a perfume like this."

Chapter 31

1Yahweh said to Moses, **2**"Pay attention. I have chosen a man named Bezalel, son of Uri and grandson of Hur, from the tribe descended from Judah. **3**I will cause my spirit to teach him to know how to make all kinds of fine goods wisely and intelligently. **4**He can engrave skillful designs in gold, silver, and bronze. **5**He can cut jewels and enclose them in tiny gold settings. He can carve things from wood and do other skilled work. **6**Pay attention! I have also appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamach, from the tribe of Dan, to work with him. I have also given special ability to other skilled men in order that they can make all the things that I have commanded you to make. **7**Those things include: The sacred tent; the sacred chest with its lid on top of it; all the other things that will be inside the sacred tent, **8**the table and all the things that the priests use with it, the pure {gold} lampstand and all the things that the priests use to take care of it, the altar for burning incense, **9**the altar for burning sacrifices and all the things the priests use with it, and the washbasin with its base; **10**the beautiful, sacred vestments for Aaron and his sons to wear when they work as priests; **11**the oil for anointing, and the sweet-smelling incense for the Holy Place. The craftsmen must make all these things exactly as I have told you that they should do."

12Yahweh said to Moses, **13**"Tell the Israelites, 'Constantly obey {my instructions regarding} the Sabbath days {for rest}. Those days will remind me and you and your descendants, throughout all future generations, that I, Yahweh,

have dedicated you {to be my people}. **14**You must obey my rules about the Sabbath days for rest, because you must regard them as dedicated to me. You must kill people who disrespect these days by working on them. You must remove them from Israel. **15**You may work for six days {each week}, but the seventh day {of each week} is a solemn Sabbath-rest day, dedicated to me, Yahweh. You must execute anyone who does any work on a Sabbath day {of rest}. **16**The Israelites must respect the Sabbath {days of rest}, and rest on them throughout all future generations. This agreement never ends **17**between me and the Israelites. It will remind you forever that I, Yahweh, created the heavens and the earth in six days, and on the seventh day I stopped doing that work and recuperated.'"

18When Yahweh finished talking with Moses on the top of Mount Sinai, he gave him the two stone slabs on which he had engraved his commandments with his own fingers.

Chapter 32

1Moses stayed on top of the mountain for a long time. When the people saw that he was not returning, they went to Aaron and said to him, "Get up and make us gods who will lead us on our journey. We do not know what happened to that man Moses, who brought us here out of Egypt."

2Aaron replied, "Take your wives' and your children's gold earrings from them, and bring them to me." **3**So the people took off all their own gold earrings and brought them to Aaron. **4**After he received the gold, he {melted it in a fire.} He molded the softened gold and made {a statue that looked like} a young bull. The people {saw it and} said, "This is the Israelite god who rescued us from Egypt!"

5When Aaron saw {how the people reacted}, he built an altar in front of the bull. Then he announced, "Tomorrow we will have a celebration to {honor} Yahweh!" **6**So early the next morning the people {killed animals} and burnt them as sacrifices on the altar. They also brought sacrifices to restore fellowship with others. Then they sat down to eat and to drink {wine}. Then they got up and partied.

7Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Go down from the mountain, because your people, the ones that you brought up here from Egypt, are acting perversely! **8**They have already stopped obeying my commands about how to live. From melted gold, they have made a statue {that looks like} a young bull. They have worshiped it and offered sacrifices to it. They are saying, 'This is the Israelite god who rescued us from Egypt!'" **9**Then Yahweh said to Moses, "I have been observing these people. Look at how obstinate they are. **10**Because of this, I am very angry with them, so I am going to destroy them. Do not try to stop me! Then I will cause you {and your descendants} to become a great nation."

11But Moses pleaded with his God, Yahweh, and said, "Yahweh, please do not be angry with your people. These are the people whom you saved from Egypt with great power and mighty works! **12**{If you destroy them} the Egyptians will say that you had a wicked plan. {They will say} you led the Israelites out to the mountains to kill them and to remove them entirely from the earth. Stop being angry and relent from punishing your people. **13**Recall your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. You solemnly promised them, 'I will enable you to have as many descendants as the stars that are in the sky. I will give those descendants all this land that I am talking about. It will be their land forever.'" **14**So Yahweh relented. He did not punish his people as he had said he would do.

15Then Moses turned around and went down the mountain. He was carrying in his hands the two stone slabs on which Yahweh had inscribed his commandments. He had inscribed on both sides of the slabs, both front and back. **16**As for the slabs, God had made them. As for the inscription, God had inscribed it. He had engraved on the slabs.

17Joshua heard the sound of the people shouting. So he said to Moses, "There is a noise in the camp that sounds like the noise of a battle!"

18But Moses said,

"That is not a victory shout;

or a defeated cry.

I hear singing!”

19As soon as Moses came close to the camp and saw the statue of the bull and the people dancing, he became very angry. He flung the stone slabs down {onto the ground} at the base of the mountain, and they broke completely. **20**Then he took the statue of the bull that they had made and melted it in the fire. {When it cooled,} he ground it into fine powder. Then he threw the powder on top of the water and forced the Israelites to drink it.

21Then Moses said to Aaron, “What did these people do to you that you caused them to sin so much?”

22Aaron replied, “Please do not be angry with me, my lord. You know how likely these people are to do wicked things. **23**They said to me, ‘Make us a god to lead us because we do not know what has happened to that Moses guy who brought us out of Egypt!’ **24**So I said to them, ‘Everyone who is wearing {pieces of} gold {jewelry} should take them off.’ So they {took them off and} gave them to me. I threw them into the fire, and out came this statue of a young bull!”

25Moses saw that Aaron had allowed the people to act wildly, so that their enemies would laugh at them. **26**So he stood at the entrance to the camp and shouted, “Everyone who is loyal to Yahweh, come close to me!” All the men in the tribe of Levi gathered around him. **27**Then he said to them, “Yahweh, the God of the Israelites, commands that every one of you should fasten your sword to your side, and then go through the camp from this entrance to the other one and back again. Each one of you must kill the {unfaithful} men, {even if} they are your brother, your friend, or your neighbor.” **28**The men in the tribe of Levi did what Moses told them to do. They killed 3, 000 Israelite men that day. **29**Moses said {to the men in the tribe of Levi}, “Because each of you {killed} even your own son and brother, Yahweh has consecrated and blessed you today.”

30The next day, Moses said to the people, “You have sinned very greatly. But I will now climb up the mountain {again} to {talk with} Yahweh. Perhaps I can {persuade him to} forgive you for sinning {like this}.” **31**So Moses went back up {the mountain} and said to Yahweh, “These people sinned very greatly when they made for themselves a gold idol {and worshiped it}! Please, **32**if you would, forgive them for their sin now. But if you will not forgive them, please erase my name from the book in which you have written {your people’s names}.”

33But Yahweh said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against me, I will erase their names from that book. **34**Now, go lead the Israelites to the place I told you about! Watch for my angel going in front of you. However, sometime I will come and I will punish them for how they sinned.”

35Later Yahweh caused the people to become sick because they had made Aaron make the bull idol.

Chapter 33

1Then Yahweh said to Moses, “Get up and go from here with the people whom you led out of Egypt. Go to the land that I promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that I would give to their descendants. **2**I will send my angel ahead of you, and I will remove the people descended from Canaan, Amor, Heth, Periz, Hiv, and Jebus from that land. **3**You will go to a land that will be very good for raising livestock and growing crops. But I will not go with you myself, because if I did that, I might annihilate you while you are traveling, because you are very obstinate people.”

4-5 Yahweh told Moses to tell the Israelites, “You are very stubborn. If I were to go with you for even a moment, I would kill you. Now take off your fine things {to show that you are sorry for sinning}. Then I will decide if I will punish you.” When the people heard that Yahweh spoke harshly, they were sorry, and no one wore fancy things. **6**From Mount Sinai on, the Israelites took off and left off all their fine things.

7{Until they built the sacred tent,} Moses set up a tent outside the camp, far away. He called it “the tent of meeting.” Everyone who wanted Yahweh to decide something for them would go out of the camp to the tent of

meeting. [8]Whenever Moses went out to the tent of meeting, all the people would stand at their own tent entrances and watch him until he had walked into the tent of meeting. [9]Whenever Moses went into the tent of meeting, the tall cloud would come down and stay at the tent entrance, and then {Yahweh} would talk with Moses. [10]When the people saw the tall cloud standing at the entrance to the tent of meeting, they would all bow to worship Yahweh at their own tent entrances. [11]Yahweh would speak directly to Moses like someone speaks to his friend. Then Moses would return to the camp. But his young helper, Joshua son of Nun, would stay in the tent of meeting.

[12]Moses said to Yahweh, “Please pay attention. You told me to lead the Israelites {to the land that you will show me}. But you have not told me whom you will send {to help} me! You also said that you know me well and that you are pleased with me. [13]So now, if you are truly pleased with me, I ask you, please tell me the things that you are going to do in order that I may know you better and continue to please you. Please remember that the Israelites are the people whom you chose to belong to you.”

[14]Yahweh replied, “I will go with you and relieve you.”

[15]Moses replied to Yahweh, “If you do not go {with me}, do not make us leave this place. [16]The only way that others will know that you are pleased with me and with your people is if you go with us! If you go with us, it will show that we are different from all the other nations on the earth.”

[17]Yahweh replied to Moses, “I will do what you have asked, because I know you well and I am pleased with you.”

[18]Then Moses said, “Please let me see how glorious you are.”

[19]Yahweh replied, “I will display to you how good I am and tell you {what} my name Yahweh {means}. I will act kindly to anyone I choose, and I will act mercifully to anyone I choose. [20]But you cannot see my face, because anyone who sees my face will die. [21]But look! Here is a place close to me where you can stand on a large rock. [22]When my glorious {light} goes by you, I will put you in a large hole in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have gone by you. [23]Then I will take my hand away, and you will see my back, but you will not see my face.”

Chapter 34

[1]Yahweh kept talking to Moses, “Cut two slabs of stone like the first slabs, the ones that you smashed. Then I will write the same thing on them as was on the first slabs. [2]Get ready tomorrow morning, and come up and stand before me at the top of Mount Sinai. [3]Do not allow anyone to come up with you. I do not want anyone else to be anywhere on the mountain. Do not even allow any sheep or cattle to eat grass near the mountain.” [4]So Moses cut two slabs of stone like the first ones. He rose early the next morning, picked up the slabs, and carried them in his hands up to the top of Mount Sinai, as Yahweh had told him.

[5]Then Yahweh came down in the tall cloud and stood there with Moses. Then Yahweh called out his name, “Yahweh.” [6]Yahweh passed in front of him and called out, “I am Yahweh God. I always act mercifully and kindly toward people, and I do not get angry quickly. I abundantly love and faithfully do what I promise for my people. [7]I abundantly love people for thousands of generations. I forgive people for doing wrong, transgressing, and sinning. But I will certainly punish the guilty. If people do wrong, I cause that to affect their descendants, down to the third and fourth generation.”

[8]Quickly Moses bowed low down on the ground and worshiped Yahweh. [9]He said, “My Lord, if you are now pleased with me, I ask that you go with us. These people are very stubborn, but forgive us for all our sins, and accept us as the people who belong to you forever.”

[10]Yahweh replied, “Pay attention! I am going to remind you of what I agreed with the Israelites. {As for me,} I will perform great miracles. These will be miracles that no one has ever done on the earth in any people group. Every nation around them will see the great things that I, Yahweh, will do. I will do things for you all that will make

everyone revere me. **11**Obey what I am about to command you today. I will surely force the Amor, Canaan, Heth, Periz, Hiv, and Jebus people groups to leave the land for you.

12Be careful that you do not agree to live peacefully with any of the people who live in the land into which you are going. If you do that, {you will begin to do the evil things that they do.} It will be like falling into a trap. **13**Rather, you must tear down their altars, destroy their idols, and cut down the poles that they use to worship Asherah. **14**{Do that} because you must not worship any other god, because I, Yahweh, am passionate for people to recognize that I am the only true God, like a husband is passionate for his wife to love only him. **15**{Again,} do not agree to live peacefully with any of the people who live in the land, because when they worship their gods and offer sacrifices to them, they will invite you to join them. Then you will {be unfaithful to me and sin by} eating the food that they sacrifice to their gods. **16**Then you will {sin by} having some of their women to be wives for your sons. These women will worship their own gods. They will also make your sons be unfaithful to me by worshiping those gods.

17Do not make your own gods by pouring melted metal into statue molds.

18Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread the way that I commanded you: eat unleavened bread for seven days in the month called Aviv. I set this time because Aviv is the month when you left Egypt.

19All your firstborn sons belong to me. All the firstborn males of your domesticated animals, cows, sheep, and goats, belong to me. **20**In the case of a firstborn donkey, you must buy it back by killing a lamb instead of it. If you do not buy it back, you must kill the donkey by breaking its neck. You must buy back every one of your firstborn sons. Do not come to worship me without bringing an offering.

21Work six days {each week}, but on the seventh day you must rest. Even during the times when you are plowing the ground or harvesting your crops, you must rest on the seventh day.

22{In the spring,} when you begin to harvest the first wheat crop, have the Celebration of Weeks, and at the end of the year have the Finished Harvest Celebration. **23**Three times every year, all the men must gather together to worship me, the Lord Yahweh, the Israelite's God. **24**Surely, I will force the people groups to leave the land you are going to, and I will make your territory larger. No one will want {to try to conquer} your country while the men come to worship Yahweh your God for these three festivals each year.

25Do not sacrifice bread you made with yeast along with blood from an animal sacrifice. Do not keep until the next morning any part of the animals you sacrificed at the Passover celebration.

26{Each year, when you harvest your crops,} take the best of what you harvest first, go to the place where you worship me, and give it to me, Yahweh your God.

{When you kill} a young animal, do not cook it by boiling it in its mother's milk."

27Yahweh said to Moses, "Write down the words that I have told you. By giving you these commands, I have made an agreement with you and with the Israelites." **28**Moses was there {on the top of the mountain} with Yahweh for 40 days and nights. During that time he did not eat or drink anything. He engraved on the stone slabs the words of the Ten Commandments which were part of Yahweh's solemn agreement.

29When Moses came back down from Mount Sinai he was carrying the two stone slabs on which he had written the Ten Commandments. His face was very bright from talking to Yahweh, but he did not know it. **30**When Aaron and the Israelites saw Moses, they were amazed that his face was bright, and were afraid to approach him. **31**But Moses summoned them, and Aaron and the other Israelite leaders came back to him, and he talked with them. **32**Afterwards, all the Israelites came near, and Moses told them all that Yahweh had commanded him on Mount Sinai. **33**When Moses finished talking to the people, he covered his face with a thin cloth.

34Whenever Moses entered the tent of meeting to talk with Yahweh, he would remove the cloth. When he came back out, he would always tell the Israelite people everything that Yahweh had commanded him to tell them. **35**The

Israelites would see that Moses' face was still bright. Then he would put the cloth on his face again until the next time that he went to talk with Yahweh.

Chapter 35

1Moses gathered all the Israelites together and said to them, "This is what Yahweh has commanded you to do.
2{Each week} you may work for six days, but on the seventh day, you must rest. It is a sacred day for you, dedicated to Yahweh. You must execute anyone who does any work on the seventh day. **3**Do not light a fire in your homes on the rest days."

4Moses also said to all the gathered Israelites, "This is what Yahweh has commanded: **5**"Everyone who wants to should bring Yahweh a gift. They should bring these sorts of gifts to Yahweh: gold, silver, or bronze, **6**{cloth dyed} blue, {cloth dyed} purple, {cloth dyed} bright red, fine linen, {cloth made from} goats' hair, **7**red ram skins, fine leather hides, hard wood from acacia trees, **8**{olive} oil to burn in the lamps, spices to put in the {olive} oil for anointing {the priests}, and spices to put in the sweet-smelling incense, **9**onyx stones and other expensive stones to fasten to the priest's sacred apron and to put on the chest pouch that is on the apron.

10All the skilled workmen among you should come and make all the things that Yahweh has commanded {you to make}: **11**the sacred tent with the inner tent; its covering, fasteners, frames, crossbars, posts, and bases; **12**the sacred chest with its poles and its lid, the curtain that will separate the Holy Place from the Very Holy Place, **13**the table with the poles for carrying it and all its utensils, the sacred bread to present before God, **14**the lampstand for making light with its implements and lamps, the oil {to burn} for light, **15**the altar for {burning} incense and the poles {for carrying the altar}, the oil for anointing and the sweet-smelling incense, the curtain for the entrance of the sacred tent, **16**the altar for burning sacrifices and its bronze grating, the poles {for carrying the altar}, and all its implements, the washbasin and its base, **17**the curtains to surround the courtyard and the posts and bases {for the posts to support the curtains}; the curtain for the entrance to the courtyard; **18**the pegs and ropes for the sacred tent and its courtyard, **19**the beautiful, sacred vestments for Aaron and his sons to wear when they work as priests in the Holy Place."

20Then all the Israelites left from where they had gathered {to listen} to Moses. **21**Everyone who wished to bring a gift to Yahweh did so. They brought things to make the sacred tent, all the other items for rituals, and the sacred vestments for the priests. **22**All the men and women who wished to brought necklaces, earrings, rings, gold ornaments—all sorts of things made from gold. Then they lifted them up high to dedicate them to Yahweh. **23**Many people who had blue, purple, or bright red {cloth}, or fine linen, or {cloth made from} goats' hair, or red rams' skins, or fine leather hides brought some of these things. **24**Everyone who {desired to} offer silver or bronze gifts brought them to Yahweh. Anyone owning wood from acacia trees brought it for any part of the building work. **25**All the women who were skilled {at making cloth} brought blue, purple, or red woolen yarn and fine linen thread that they had made by hand-spinning. **26**All the skilled women who wanted to made {thread} from goats' hair by spinning.
27The leaders brought onyx stones and other fine stones for fastening to {Aaron's} sacred apron and sacred pouch,
28and spices and oil to use for the lamps, anointing oil, and sweet-smelling incense. **29**All the Israelite men and women who wanted to bring these things freely offered them to Yahweh for doing the work that he had commanded Moses tell them to do.

30Moses said to the Israelites, "Listen carefully. Yahweh has chosen a man named Bezalel, son of Uri and grandson of Hur, from the tribe descended from Judah. **31**Yahweh has caused his Spirit to teach him to know how to make all kinds of fine goods wisely and intelligently. **32**He can engrave skillful designs in gold, silver, and bronze. **33**He can cut jewels and enclose them in tiny gold settings. He can carve things from wood and do other inventive, skilled work. **34**Yahweh has also made Bezalel and Oholiab son of Ahisamak, from the tribe of Dan, able to teach {others what they do}. **35**He has enabled them to skillfully do all kinds of crafts-work—those who create artistic things, those who embroider designs using blue, purple, or red woolen yarn with linen cloth, and those who make the cloth. They are able to plan and do many kinds of artistic work.

Chapter 36

[1]Bezalel and Oholiab will do this work along with all the other skillful people. Yahweh has made them skillful and able to know how to follow his instructions to build the sacred place."

[2]So Moses summoned Bezalel and Oholiab and all the other people that Yahweh had made skillful who wished to come do some of the work. [3]They took all the gifts for building the sacred tent from Moses that the Israelites had brought to him. But the Israelites continued gladly bringing more gifts every morning. [4]As a result, each and every skillful craftsman who was working to make the sacred tent left their work and came to Moses. [5]The craftsmen told him, "The Israelites are bringing many times more than we need to build as Yahweh has commanded us!" [6]So Moses told them to proclaim a message throughout the camp, "Everyone should stop making and bringing material gifts for the sacred tent!" So the people stopped bringing gifts. [7]They had more than enough materials for all the work.

[8]All the most skilled men among the workmen made the sacred tent, using ten long strips of finely twisted linen. A skilled craftsman took blue, purple, and red thread, and embroidered these strips with designs that represent the winged creatures that are above the chest. [9]Each strip was 14. 5 meters long and two meters wide. They were all the same size. [10]He sewed five strips together {as one set}, and sewed the other five strips together {as another set}. [11]For each set, he made loops of blue cloth and fastened them along the outer edge of the strip, at the end of each set. [12]He put 50 loops on the edge of the first set, and 50 loops at the edge of the second set so that the loops were opposite each other. [13]He made 50 gold fasteners and fastened both of the sets together with them to make the sacred tent one unit.

[14]He made a cover for the sacred tent from 11 pieces of cloth made from goats' hair. [15]Each of the 11 pieces of cloth was the same dimensions: 15 meters long and two meters wide. [16]He sewed five of these pieces of cloth together {to make one set}, and he sewed the other six pieces of cloth together {to make another set}. [17]He made {100 loops of blue cloth,} and fastened 50 of them to the outer edge of a set and fastened 50 to the outer edge of the other set. [18]He made 50 bronze clasps for connecting the tent into one big piece. [19]He made another cover from red rams' skins to go over the tent, and a top cover from fine leather hides.

[20]He made a standing framework from acacia wood for the sacred tent. [21]Each frame was five meters long and three-quarters of a meter wide. [22]He made two pegs {at the bottom of} each frame to fasten them together. He made each frame for the tabernacle this way. [23]He made 20 frames for the south side of the sacred tent. [24]He made 40 silver bases to go underneath the 20 frames. He put two bases under each frame and fit their two pegs into the bases. [25]For the other side—{that is,} the north side—of the sacred tent he made 20 frames [26]and 40 silver bases for them. {They put} two bases under each frame. [27]For the rear of the sacred tent, on the west side, he made six frames. [28]They made two frames for the rear corners of the sacred tent. [29]He matched them to each other at the bottom and top. He secured the tops together with a ring. He did this for both, making them the corner pieces. [30]He made eight frames and 16 silver bases, two bases under each frame.

[31]He made crossbars from acacia wood. He made five crossbars for the frames on the {north} side of the sacred tent, [32]five crossbars for the frames on the {south} side of the sacred tent, and five crossbars for the frames at the rear of the sacred tent, on the west. [33]He made the center crossbar, right in the middle of the frames, reach all the way from edge to edge. [34]He covered the frames and crossbars with gold. He made the rings for fastening the crossbars to the frames from gold.

[35]He made a curtain from fine linen. A skilled craftsman embroidered it with blue, purple, and red yarn, making designs to represent the winged creatures that are above the sacred chest. [36]He made four posts from acacia wood for the curtain. He covered them and their hooks with gold. He formed four silver bases for the posts. [37]He made a curtain as the tent entrance. A skilled weaver made it from fine linen with blue, purple, and red yarn. [38]{He

also made} five posts with hooks on them. He covered the tops of the posts and their connectors with gold and {made} a bronze base for each of those posts.

Chapter 37

1Then Bezalel made the sacred chest from acacia wood. He made it 125 centimeters long, 75 centimeters wide, and 75 centimeters high. **2**He covered the chest with pure gold inside and outside and made a gold molding for all around it. **3**He made four rings from gold and fastened them to the four legs of the chest. He put two of the rings on each side of the chest. **4**He made two poles from acacia wood, and covered them with gold. **5**He put the poles into the rings on the sides of the chest so that {the Levites} could carry it. **6**He made a lid for the chest from pure gold. It was 125 centimeters long and 75 centimeters wide. **7**He hammered {a large lump of} gold into the form of two creatures that have wings for the two ends of the lid. **8**He made the winged creatures {from the gold} from each end of the sacred chest's lid, one at one end and the other at the other end. **9**The creature's wings spread out and reached up to cover the lid. They faced each other, facing the chest's lid that was between them.

10He made a table from acacia wood. It was one meter long, one-half of a meter wide, and three-quarters of a meter high. **11**He covered the table with pure gold and put a gold molding all around it. **12**He made a rim all around it, eight centimeters wide, and made a gold molding around the rim. **13**He molded four rings from gold. He fastened them to the four corners of the table. Each ring was close to each table leg **14**near the rim. They held poles for carrying the table. **15**He made two poles from acacia wood and covered them with gold. They were for carrying the table. **16**He made all the utensils for the table from pure gold—dishes, cups, bowls, and jars {for the priests to use} to pour out {wine to offer to Yahweh}. **17**He made the lampstand from pure gold. He hammered {one large lump of gold} to make its base and its shaft. He made the cups, with the flower buds and petals {that decorate them}, from that same lump. **18**There were six branches on the lampstand, three on each side of the shaft. **19**Each branch had three gold cups that looked like almond flowers on it. The flowers had buds and petals. It was the same for all six branches of the lampstand. **20**On {the shaft of} the lampstand there were four cups that also looked like almond blossoms, each one with flower buds and petals. **21**He made one flower bud beneath every two branches. He attached it to each pair of branches {as if they were growing} from it. He made all six lampstand branches like this. **22**He hammered all these buds and branches{, along with the shaft,} from one {large lump} of pure gold. **23**He made from pure gold: seven lamps, tongs {to remove the burned wicks}, and trays {in which to put the burned wicks}. **24**He used 33 kilograms of pure gold to make the lampstand, the tongs, and the trays.

25He made the altar for burning incense from acacia wood. It was square, one-half meter on each side and one meter high. There were {projections that looked like} horns on the same block of wood as the altar. **26**He covered the top and the four sides, including the projections, with pure gold. He put a gold molding all around it. **27**He made two gold rings and attached them to the altar below the molding, one on each side of the altar. These rings were to hold the poles for carrying the altar. **28**He made those two poles from acacia wood and covered them with gold. **29**He made the sacred oil for anointing and the pure sweet-smelling incense. A perfumer mixed the incense together.

Chapter 38

1Bezalel made the altar for burning sacrifices from acacia wood. It was square, two and a half meters long on each side, and one and a half meters tall. **2**He made a {projection that looks like a} horn on each of the top corners from the same block of wood as the altar. He covered the whole altar with bronze. **3**He made all the implements for the altar: the pans, shovels, basins, forks for working with cooking meat, and buckets for carrying hot coals. He made all of these implements from bronze. **4**He made a bronze lattice grating {to hold the wood and burning coals}. He put the grating under the rim {that was around the altar}. He made it so that it was inside the altar, halfway down. **5**He molded four bronze rings in which to put the poles for the lattice and fastened them to its four corners. **6**He

made the poles from acacia wood and covered them with bronze. [7]He put the poles for carrying the altar through the rings on each side of the altar. He made the altar from boards; it was hollow in the middle.

[8]He made the bronze washbasin and the bronze base for it. The bronze was from the mirrors that belonged to the women who worked at the entrance of the sacred tent.

[9]He made a courtyard {around the sacred tent}. On the south side, he hung a fine linen curtain 50 meters long [10]from 20 {bronze} posts that had 20 bronze bases for the posts and hooks on them and silver connectors. [11]For the north side {of the courtyard}, he hung 50 meters of curtains from 20 posts, each with their bronze bases, hooks, and silver connectors. [12]For the west side {of the courtyard}, he hung 25 meters of curtains from ten posts, each with their bases, hooks, and silver connectors. [13]The east side also was 25 meters wide. [14]{He made} a curtain seven and a half meters long for one side {of the entrance}, with three posts and bases. [15]On the other side, opposite from the entrance to the courtyard, {he made} a curtain seven and a half meters long, also with three posts and bases. [16]There were fine linen curtains all around the courtyard. [17]All the posts' bases were bronze. They covered the tops with silver. The pillars' hooks and loops were silver. The ends of the courtyard's pillars had a rounded silver finish. [18]For the entrance of the courtyard, {they made} a curtain from finely twined linen, and a skilled weaver embroidered it with blue, purple, and red yarn. The curtain was ten meters long and two and a half meters high, just like the other curtains around the courtyard. [19]It had four posts, each with a bronze base. They covered the tops of the posts and their hooks with silver. The loops were silver. [20]They made all the tent pegs to hold the sacred tent and the curtains around the courtyard of bronze.

[21]This is a list of all the materials that the craftsmen used to make the sacred tent where the Ten Commandments were. Moses instructed some men from the tribe of Levi to write the list. Ithamar, son of Aaron the priest, supervised the men who wrote it. [22]Bezalel of the tribe of Judah, son of Uri and grandson of Hur made all the things that Yahweh had commanded Moses to make. [23]Oholiab son of Ahisamak, from the tribe of Dan worked with Bezealel. Oholiab was a skilled engraver who made artistic things. He embroidered designs using blue, purple, and red woolen yarn, and linen.

[24]All the gold that they used to make the sacred tent weighed 965 kilograms. They used the official standard when they weighed the gold that the people dedicated to Yahweh. [25]All the silver that the people {contributed when the leaders took the} census weighed 3, 420 kilograms. They also used the official standard when they weighed the silver. [26]They had counted all the men who were at least twenty years old, and each man had paid a silver coin that weighed about five grams, according to the official standard. That was a total of 603, 550 men. [27]It took 3, 400 kilograms of silver to make the bases under the posts that supported the sacred tent's curtains. They used 34 kilograms for each of the 100 bases. [28]With the remaining the 20 kilograms of silver, they made the hooks for the posts, covered the tops of the posts, and made rounded corners. [29]The people had contributed about 2, 400 kilograms of bronze. [30]With the bronze he made the bases to support the posts at the entrance of the sacred tent, the altar {for burning sacrifices} with its grate and its tools, [31]the bases {for the posts that supported the curtains} that surrounded the courtyard, the bases for the entrance to the courtyard, and the pegs for the sacred tent and for the curtains around the courtyard.

Chapter 39

[1]Bezalel, Oholiab, and the other skilled workmen made the beautiful holy vestments for Aaron to wear while he served Yahweh as a priest in the Holy Place. They made them from blue, purple, and red woolen cloth, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

[2]He made the sacred apron from finely twisted linen, blue, purple, and red thread, and with {fine} gold {wire}. [3]They hammered some thin sheets of gold and cut them into thin strips that they embroidered into the fine linen and into the blue, purple, and red cloth. [4]They made shoulder straps to attach the two sides of the ephod together. [5]{They made} a carefully woven belt that matched the sacred apron. They made it from the same piece of cloth as

the apron. (That cloth was finely twisted linen with {skillfully embroidered} blue, purple, red thread, and {fine} gold {thread}.) {They sewed it} onto the apron, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses. **6**They cut two onyx stones and mounted them in decorative gold settings. They engraved the names of the twelve sons of Jacob on the stones like someone engraves a signet ring. **7**They fastened the stones onto the shoulder straps of the sacred apron to memorialize the names of the 12 tribes of Israel, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

8He made the sacred pouch of the same materials as the sacred apron and skillfully embroidered it in the same way with gold, blue, purple, and red finely twisted linen. **9**They folded the material double so that they made the pouch a double-folded square 23 centimeters long and 23 centimeters wide. **10**They fastened four rows of valuable stones onto the pouch. In the first row, they put a red ruby, a yellow topaz, and a red garnet. **11**They put a green emerald, a blue sapphire, and a white diamond in the second row. **12**They put a red jacinth, a white agate, and a purple amethyst in the third row. **13**They put a yellow beryl, an onyx, and a green jasper in the fourth row. They put tiny gold frames around each of the stones. **14**{They carved} the name of one of the 12 sons of Jacob into each of these stones like they were making signet rings. These name-stones represented the 12 tribes of Israel.

15They attached two chains that they made from purified gold and braided like cords to the sacred pouch. **16**They made two decorative gold settings and two gold rings and attached them to the upper corners of the sacred pouch. **17**They fastened one end of each gold cord to one of the rings on the top corner of the pouch. **18**They fastened the other end of each cord to the two decorative settings that enclose the stones. Then they put those on the front side of the shoulder straps of the sacred apron. **19**Then they made two more gold rings and attached them to the lower corners of the sacred pouch on the inside edges next to the sacred apron. **20**They made two more gold rings and attached them to the lower part of the front of the shoulder straps near where the shoulder straps join with the sacred apron just above the sash. **21**They tied the rings on the sacred pouch to the rings on the sacred apron with a blue cord, so that the sacred pouch was above the sash and would not come loose from the sacred apron. They did these things exactly as Yahweh had instructed Moses to do.

22Bezalel had a weaver make the robe {that Aaron would wear underneath his} sacred apron from only blue material. **23**It had an opening in the middle like other clothing. They made a border around this opening to prevent the material from tearing. **24**At the lower edge of the robe they fastened decorations that resembled pomegranate fruit. They wove the decorations from blue, purple, and red woolen yarn. **25**They made bells from purified gold and fastened them between each of the decorative pomegranates all around the bottom of the robe. **26**So the pattern was bell, pomegranate, bell, pomegranate, and so on all around the bottom of the robe. {The robe was} for {Aaron to wear while he} worked as a priest, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

27For Aaron and his sons, a skilled weaver made long-sleeved tunics from fine linen, **28**the turban and the caps from fine linen, the undershorts from very finely twined linen, **29**and the sash from fine linen with blue, purple, and red woolen embroidery, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

30They made a sacred ornamental decoration from purified gold and etched into it the words, 'Dedicated to Yahweh,' just like carving a signet ring. **31**They attached a blue cord to this for fastening it to the top of the turban, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

32{After this,} they had finished all the work on the sacred tent where they would meet with Yahweh. The Israelites had done everything in exactly the way that Yahweh had commanded Moses to have it done. **33**The craftsmen brought Moses the whole sacred tent structure: the tent and all its equipment, the fasteners, frames, crossbars, posts, bases, **34**the red rams' skin and fine leather hide coverings {for the sacred tent}, the curtain for hiding {the holiest place}, **35**the sacred chest, the poles, the chests' lid, **36**the table and all its utensils, the sacred bread to present before God, **37**the pure {gold} lampstand with all its lamps in a line, and its utensils, and the oil to burn for light, **38**the golden altar {for burning incense}, the oil for anointing, the sweet-smelling incense, the curtain for the entrance to the sacred tent, **39**the bronze altar and its bronze grating, the poles, and all its implements, the washbasin and its base, **40**the curtains to surround the courtyard and the posts and bases, the curtain for the entrance to the courtyard, the ropes and pegs and all the things for serving in the sacred tent where they would

meet Yahweh, **41**and the beautiful, sacred vestments for Aaron and his sons to wear when they work as priests in the Holy Place. **42**The Israelites had done all the work in exactly the way that Yahweh had commanded Moses to have it done. **43**Then Moses examined everything they had made. Truly, they had done everything exactly as Yahweh had commanded them to do it. Then Moses blessed the workmen.

Chapter 40

1Then Yahweh said to Moses, **2**"Set up the sacred tent where you will meet with me on the first day of the first month of the year. **3**Put inside it the sacred chest containing the stone slabs with the Ten Commandments. Hide it by hanging its curtain in front of it. **4**Bring the table into the sacred tent and neatly organize on it all the things that they made for it. Then bring in the lampstand and put the lamps up into it. **5**Put the gold altar for burning incense in front of the sacred chest, and set up the curtain at the entrance of the sacred tent. **6**Put the altar for burning sacrifices in front of the entrance to the sacred tent where you will meet with me. **7**Put the washbasin between the sacred tent and the altar, and fill it with water. **8**Hang the curtains around the outside to make the courtyard, and also hang up the courtyard's entrance curtain.

9Then take the oil for anointing and put it on the sacred tent and everything that is in it, to consecrate it all to me. Then it will be dedicated to me. **10**Also put some of the oil on the altar on which the priests will burn the sacrifices and on all the things that they will use at the altar. This will consecrate the altar to me. Then it will be scared, dedicated to me. **11**Also put some of the oil on the washbasin and its base, to consecrate them to me.

12Then bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the sacred tent and wash them with water. **13**Then set Aaron apart for serving me as a priest by putting his sacred vestments on him and by pouring oil on him. **14**Also bring Aaron's sons and put their special tunics on them, **15**then pour oil on them just as you did on their father. This will consecrate them to serve me as priests. By pouring oil on them, you will cause them and their descendants to be priests throughout all their future generations."

16Moses did all these things exactly as Yahweh had commanded him to do.

17On the first day of the first month of Israel's second year, the people set up the sacred tent. **18**Moses set up the sacred tent, and its bases, frames, crossbars, and posts. **19**He spread out the two layers of coverings over the sacred tent, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses. **20**Then Moses took the two stone slabs on which Yahweh had written his commandments and put them into the sacred chest. He put the carrying poles into the rings on the chest and put the lid on top of it. **21**Then Moses took the chest into {the Holy Place inside} the sacred tent. He hung the thick curtain to conceal the chest containing the commandments, exactly as Yahweh had commanded him. **22**He set the table inside the sacred tent, on its north side, outside the curtain {that hid the sacred chest}. **23**He laid out the bread neatly on the table to display it before Yahweh, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses to do. **24**He set the lampstand inside the sacred tent, on the south side, on the opposite side from the table. **25**Then he set the lamps on the lampstand in Yahweh's presence, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses. **26**He set the gold altar {for burning incense} inside the sacred tent, in front of the curtain {that hid the Most Holy Place}. **27**He burned some sweet-smelling incense on it, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses. **28**He hung the curtain at the entrance to the sacred tent. **29**At the entrance to the sacred tent where they would meet with Yahweh, he placed the altar for burning sacrifices. Then he sacrificed meat and flour by burning them on it, just as Yahweh had commanded Moses. **30**He set the washbasin between the sacred tent and the bronze altar, and filled the washbasin with water. **31**Moses, Aaron, and his sons would wash their hands and feet in the washbasin. **32**Whenever they went into the sacred tent and whenever they came close to the altar, they would wash themselves, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses. **33**He hung up {the curtains that} surrounded the sacred tent and the altar and the curtain at the entrance to the courtyard. Then Moses was finished building the sacred tent complex.

34Then the tall cloud covered the sacred tent, and Yahweh's power and brilliant light filled the sacred tent. **35**Because the cloud covered it and Yahweh's light was very bright, Moses was not able to enter the sacred tent.

36{From that day,} whenever Yahweh’s cloud moved off of the sacred, tent the Israelites would {pack their camp}
and start traveling. **37**But if the cloud did not move, they stayed where they were and waited for a day that the
cloud moved. **38**Wherever the Israelites traveled, Yahweh’s cloud was above the sacred tent during the day, and his
fire was over it at night. The Israelites could always see {that Yahweh was with them}.

Leviticus

Chapter 1

1Yahweh summoned Moses from the sacred tent. He told him **2**to tell the Israelite people, “When any of you offers
an animal to me, Yahweh, you should offer it from your farm animals, from your cattle or from your sheep and
goats.

3If you want to offer a bull as a wholly burned sacrifice, then you should offer a totally healthy male. You should
present this animal at the entrance of the sacred tent. When you do, I, Yahweh, will regard it as acceptable. **4**You
should place your hands on the head of the bull that the priest will burn completely on the altar. When you do that,
I, Yahweh, will accept the animal as an appropriate sacrifice for you, and I will remove your sins from you. **5**You
should kill the bull that you want to present in the sacred precincts where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelites.
Then the priests, Aaron’s sons, should take the blood from the bull and splatter it onto every side of the altar that is
at the entrance of the sacred tent. **6**You should remove the skin from the bull that you are presenting as a wholly
burned sacrifice. Then you should cut the animal into pieces. **7**Then the sons of Aaron, who are priests themselves
because Aaron was the first priest, should set burning coals on the altar and place pieces of wood on the coals so
that the wood will catch fire. **8**Then the priests, Aaron’s sons, will organize the pieces of the animal that you killed
and cut up, including the head and the fat portions, on the wood fire that is burning on the top of the altar.
9{Before the priest burns up} the stomach and intestines and legs of the animal, you should wash them carefully
with water. {Make sure that only clean things go on my altar}. The priest should completely burn every part of the
animal on the altar in a way that causes smoke to go up. This will fulfill the requirements for the wholly burned
sacrifice. I, Yahweh, will consider it to be a gift, and I will enjoy the smell of the smoke.

10But if you want to offer a smaller animal as a wholly burned sacrifice, whether a sheep or a goat, then you should
offer a totally healthy male. **11**You should kill the sheep or goat that you want to present on the north side of the
altar in the sacred precincts where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelites. Then the priests, Aaron’s sons, should take
the blood from the sheep or the goat and splatter it onto every side of the altar. **12**You should then cut the animal
into pieces, including its head and its fat portions. Then the priest should organize those pieces on a wood fire that
he builds on the altar. **13**{Before the priest burns up} the stomach, intestines, and legs of the animal, you should
wash them with water. {Make sure that only clean things go on my altar.} The priest should present all these
portions of the animal to me and completely burn it on the altar in a way that causes smoke to go up. This will
fulfill the requirements for the wholly burned sacrifice. I, Yahweh, will consider it to be a gift, and I will enjoy the
smell of the smoke.

14But if you want to offer a bird to me as a wholly burned sacrifice, then you should offer a dove or a pigeon. **15**The
priest should bring the bird to the altar, break its neck and twist off its head. Then the priest should completely
burn the head on the altar in a way that causes smoke to go up. Next, the priest should drain the bird’s blood on
the outer edge of the altar. **16**Then the priest should take out the bird’s esophagus, remove all the bird’s feathers,
and dispose of them on the east side of the altar. The priest should put them where the priests also dispose of the
ashes from the fat of other sacrifices. **17**Then the priest should tear the bird open, holding it by its wings, but he
should not tear it into two parts. Next, on the wood fire that he builds on the altar, the priest should burn the bird
completely in a way that causes smoke to go up. This will fulfill the requirements for the wholly burned sacrifice. I,
Yahweh, will consider it to be a gift, and I will enjoy the smell of the smoke.

Chapter 2

1Now if you want to offer a grain offering to me, Yahweh, you should offer wheat flour. Pour out some olive oil on it
and place incense on top of it. **2**You should bring the offering of wheat flour to Aaron’s sons, the priests. A priest

should scoop out of your offering a handful of the flour and olive oil, as well as all the incense—as large a handful as he is able to scoop. Then, the priest should burn the portion of your offering that he scooped out with his hand, doing it in a way that causes smoke to go up on the altar. When this happens, I, Yahweh, will consider it to be a gift, and I will enjoy the smell of the smoke of the offering. **3**The rest of the wheat flour that you offer, as a sacrifice to me, you should preserve for Aaron and his sons. You should consider this portion of the offering as especially set apart for the priests among all the gifts that you offer to me, Yahweh, and that are set apart for me.

4But if you want to offer grain offering that consists of something that you baked in an oven, you should offer wheat flour that you mixed with olive oil into unleavened cakes. Or you could offer wheat flour that you shaped into unleavened crackers and coated with olive oil. **5**But if your grain offering consists of something that you pan-fried on a griddle, you should offer wheat flour that you mixed with olive oil into unleavened bread. **6**You should break the offering into pieces and pour out some olive oil onto it. These actions qualify the offering as a grain offering. **7**If your grain offering consists of something that you deep-fried in a pan, you should offer wheat flour that you mixed with olive oil. **8**In any case, you should bring to me, Yahweh, the grain offering that you have made in this way with these ingredients. You should present the offering to the priest. He will bring it to the altar. **9**There he should lift out from the grain offering the portion that he will burn. Then he should burn that handful on the altar in a way that causes smoke to go up. When this happens, I, Yahweh will consider the offering to be a gift, and I will enjoy the smell of the smoke. **10**The rest of the grain offering you should preserve for Aaron and his sons. You should consider this portion of the sacrifice as especially set apart for the priests among all the gifts that you offer to me, Yahweh, and that are set apart for me.

11You should not burn any gift to me that contains any yeast or any honey on the altar in a way that causes smoke to go up. Make sure that whenever you offer a grain offering to me, Yahweh, you have prepared it without using yeast. **12**Any offerings to me that contain yeast or honey you should offer as a presentation of the produce of the field that has been harvested first. But do not burn these kinds of grain offerings on the altar so that they go up to me, Yahweh, as pleasant-smelling smoke. **13**Likewise, you should season every grain offering with salt. You should never present a grain offering without the salt, which reminds you of my promises to you. Every grain offering should contain salt that you have also presented to me, Yahweh.

14But if you want to offer to me a grain offering that consists of the first harvest of ripened grains, do this. Offer the first ripe grains that you harvest, ears of grain in the early stage of ripening that you have roasted over a fire, that is, grains from your first ripened ears of grain that you have crushed. **15**You should pour out some olive oil on these kinds of offerings and you should place incense on them. These kinds of offerings also qualify as grain offerings. **16**The priest should burn the portion of the offering that he scooped out with his handful—the crushed grains and the olive oil, as well as all of the incense—in a way that causes smoke to go up. When this happens, I, Yahweh will consider the offering to be a gift.

Chapter 3

1But if you want to offer a fellowship sacrifice, do this. If you want to offer a bovine, whether the animal is male or female, you should offer a totally healthy animal in the place where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelites. **2**You should place your hands on the head of the bovine that you are offering. You should kill that animal in the entrance to the sacred tent. Then the priests, Aaron's sons, should take the blood from the bovine and splatter it onto every side of the altar. **3**And from your fellowship sacrifice, you should offer a gift to me, Yahweh. This gift should consist of the caul fat that covers all the internal organs and all the visceral fat that is attached to the internal organs. **4**This gift should include both kidneys and the suet fat that is attached to them near the loin cuts. It should also include the lobes of the bovine's liver and the kidneys (which you should also remove). **5**Then {one of the priests} descended from Aaron should burn these fat portions and internal organs on the altar in such a way that it causes smoke to go up alongside the wholly burned sacrifices that the priest is burning on the wood fire {that he has built on the altar}. I, Yahweh, will consider this sacrifice a gift, and I will enjoy the smell of the smoke.

6But if you want to offer an animal from your flocks of sheep or goats to me, Yahweh, as a fellowship sacrifice,
whether the animal is male or female, you should offer a totally healthy animal. **7**If you want to offer a lamb, you
should offer it in the place where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelites. **8**You should place your hands on the head of
the lamb that you are offering. You should kill it before the sacred tent. Then {one of the priests} descended from
Aaron should take the blood from the lamb and splatter it onto every side of the altar. **9**And from your fellowship
sacrifice, you should offer a gift to me, Yahweh. This gift should consist of all the sheep's intestinal fat, the entire
portion of the tail fat (which you should cut off near the backbone), the caul fat that covers all the internal organs,
and all the visceral fat that is attached to the internal organs. **10**Your gift should also include both kidneys, the suet
fat that is attached to them near the loin cuts, the lobes of the lamb's liver, and the kidneys (which you should also
remove). **11**Then the priest should burn all the fat and the internal organs on the altar in a way that causes smoke
to go up. You should consider this sacrifice as a gift of food for my holy purposes.

12Likewise, if you want to offer a goat to me, you should offer it in the place where I, Yahweh, live among the
Israelites. **13**You should place your hands on the head of the goat that you are offering. You should kill the animal
in the entrance to the sacred tent. Then {one of the priests} descended from Aaron should take the blood from the
goat and splatter it onto every side of the altar. **14**And from your sacrifice, you should offer a gift to me, Yahweh.
This gift should consist of the caul fat that covers all the internal organs and all the visceral fat that is attached to
the internal organs. **15**Your gift should also include both kidneys, the suet fat that is attached to them near the loin
cuts, the lobes of the lamb's liver, and the kidneys (which you should also remove). **16**Then the priest should burn all
the fat and the internal organs on the altar in a way that causes smoke to go up. You should consider this sacrifice
as a gift of food for my holy purposes, and I, Yahweh, will enjoy the smell of the smoke of the sacrifice. {You should
not eat any of this fat,} because all of the fat of any animal that you sacrifice belongs exclusively to me.

17This is an enduring and permanent command that must be observed by you and all your descendants, wherever
you happen to live: {Because they belong exclusively to me,} you must not consume the fat or the blood of any
animal that you sacrifice to me."

Chapter 4

1Then Yahweh told Moses **2**to tell the Israelite people, "It may happen that someone does wrong against me
unintentionally and does something that I, Yahweh, specifically commanded my people not to do.

3It may happen that the high priest himself does wrong against me in a way that brings guilt on the whole people.
If this happens, to address the wrongdoing that he has done, the high priest should offer a totally healthy bull to
me, Yahweh, as a purifying sacrifice. **4**That priest should bring the bull to the entrance of the sacred tent, to my
presence. He should place his hand on the head of the bull that he wants to offer and kill it in the place where I,
Yahweh, live among the Israelites. **5**{After catching the draining blood of the bull in a bowl,} the high priest should
take some of that blood and bring it into the sacred tent. **6**The priest should dip one of his fingers into the blood,
and he should flick some of the bull's blood seven times in the direction of the front of the curtain that separates
the rest of the sacred tent from the Most Holy Place, where I, Yahweh, live among the people of Israel. **7**Then, in my
presence—I, Yahweh, who resides behind the sacred curtain—the priest should drip some of that blood onto the
four projected corners of the altar where the priests burn fragrant incense, which is located inside the sacred tent.
Next, the priest should pour the rest of the bull's blood onto the base of the altar where the priests offer the wholly
burned sacrifices, which is located at the entrance of the sacred tent. **8**The priest should then carefully remove all
the fat of the bull that he is offering as a purifying sacrifice. He should remove the caul fat that covers all the
internal organs, all the visceral fat that is attached to the internal organs, **9**both kidneys, and the suet fat that is
attached to them near the loin cuts. He should also remove the lobes of the bull's liver, which he shall remove with
the kidneys, **10**in the same way that you might remove the fat portions and the internal organs from the bovines
that you offer as fellowship sacrifices. Then, on the altar where the priests offer the wholly burned sacrifices, the
high priest should burn all these pieces of fat and the internal organs in a way that causes smoke to go up. **11**But
all the other parts of the animal, its skin and all its other meat, including the meat on the bull's head and its legs

below the knee, its other internal organs, and any excrement— **12**someone else should take all of these remaining parts of the bull outside of the camp. That person should dispose of them in a place that is ceremonially clean, in the place where the priests also dispose of ashes from the fat of other sacrifices {so that the impurities of these pieces do not cause the people to become impure accidentally}. The person who does this should also burn all these remaining parts of the bull in a wood fire that he builds on the place where the priests also dispose of ashes from the fat of other sacrifices.

13Or it may happen that the whole community of Israel does wrong against me unintentionally and does something that I, Yahweh, specifically commanded my people not to do. Even if the community is unaware of the fact that they did wrong, nevertheless, they will be guilty. **14**When they become aware of the wrongdoing that they have done against my commandments, the whole community should offer a bull as a purifying sacrifice. They should bring the bull to the front of the sacred tent. **15**Then the oldest and most respected members of the community should lay their hands on the head of the bull in my presence. One of them should kill the bull in the sacred precincts of the sacred tent where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelite people. **16**{After catching the draining blood of the bull in a bowl,} the high priest should take some of that blood and bring it into the sacred tent. **17**The priest should dip one of his fingers into the blood and, while standing in the precincts of the sacred tent where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelite people, he should flick some of the bull's blood seven times in the direction of the front of the curtain that separates the rest of the sacred tent from the Most Holy Place. **18**Then the priest should drip some of that blood onto the four projected corners of the altar that is directly in front of the curtain behind which I, Yahweh, live in the Most Holy Place. That is the altar which is located inside the sacred tent. Next, the priest should pour the rest of the bull's blood onto the base of the altar where the priests offer sacrifices that they burn completely. That altar is located at the entrance of the sacred tent. **19**The priest should then carefully remove all the fat of the bull, and he should burn it on the altar in a way that causes smoke to go up. **20**The high priest should prepare this bull in the same way that he would prepare the bull that he would offer as a purifying sacrifice. When this happens, the priest will be able to offer a sacrifice that I, Yahweh, will accept for the sake of the people. I will remove the people's sins from them and forgive them for their unintentional wrongdoing. **21**Then someone should take the remaining parts of the bull outside of the camp and burn them. He should burn them in the same way that a person would burn the remaining parts of the bull that the high priest offered as a purifying sacrifice. This is the way that the community should offer a purifying sacrifice.

22Or it may happen that a leading member of the community does wrong against me unintentionally and does something that I, Yahweh the God of the people of Israel, specifically commanded my people not to do. If this happens, he will become guilty. **23**When the leader becomes aware of the wrongdoing that he did against my commandments, he should bring a totally healthy male goat {to the sacred precincts where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelite people.} **24**The leader should place his hand on the head of the goat that he wants to offer, and he should kill it in my presence. He should do this in the same place where people would kill the animals that they offer as wholly burned sacrifices. This is the way to offer a purifying sacrifice. **25**{After catching the draining blood of the bull in a bowl,} the priest should take some of the blood of the animal that the leader sacrificed as an offering to purify him from the impurities of his sin, {dip} one of his fingers into it, and drip some of the blood onto the four projected corners of the altar where the priests offer the wholly burned sacrifices. Next, the priest should pour the rest of the goat's blood onto the base of the same altar. **26**{After the leader carefully removes the appropriate portions of fat and internal organs,} the priest should burn all the fat of the goat on the altar in a way that causes smoke to go up. He should do this just as he would burn the fat of a fellowship sacrifice. When this happens, the priest will have offered a sacrifice that I, Yahweh, will accept for the sake of the leader. I will remove the leader's sins from him and forgive him for his unintentional wrongdoing.

27Or it may happen that an Israelite {who is not a priest} unintentionally does wrong against me. He may do something that I, Yahweh, specifically commanded my people not to do. That person then will become guilty. **28**When the Israelite becomes aware of the wrongdoing that he did, he should bring a totally healthy female goat as an offering to me to address the wrongdoing that he did. **29**The Israelite should place his hand on the head of the goat that he wants to offer as a purifying sacrifice and kill it in the same place where people would kill the animals that they offer as wholly burned sacrifices. **30**{After catching the draining blood of the bull in a bowl,} the priest should take some of the blood of the goat and dip one of his fingers into it. He should drip some of the

blood onto the four projected corners of the altar where the priests offer the wholly burned sacrifices. Next, the priest should pour the rest of the goat's blood onto the base of the same altar. **31**Then the individual offering the sacrifice should remove all the goat's fat just as he would remove the fat from a goat the he would offer as a fellowship sacrifice. Next, the priest should burn the goat's fat on the altar in a way that causes smoke to go up. I, Yahweh, will enjoy the smell of the smoke. When this happens, the priest will have offered a sacrifice that I will accept for the sake of the individual. I will remove the individual's sins from him and will forgive him.

32But if that person wants to bring a lamb as his purifying sacrifice, he should bring a totally healthy female lamb. **33**The person should place his hand on the head of the lamb that he wants to offer as a purifying sacrifice. Once he has done this, he should kill it in the same place where people would kill the animals that they offer as wholly burned sacrifices. **34**{After catching the draining blood of the lamb in a bowl,} the priest should take some of the blood of the animal that the individual wants to offer as a purifying sacrifice. He should {dip} one of his fingers into it and drip some of the blood onto the four projected corners of the altar where the priests offer the wholly burned sacrifices. The priest should pour the rest of the lamb's blood onto the base of the same altar. **35**Then the individual who offers the sacrifice should remove all the lamb's fat just as he would remove the fat of a lamb that he would offer as a fellowship sacrifice. Next, the priest should burn the lamb's fat on the altar in a way that causes smoke to go up on top of the other gifts that people have offered to me, Yahweh. When this happens, the priest will have offered a sacrifice that I will accept for the sake of the individual. I remove from him the person's sins that he has done and will forgive him.

Chapter 5

1It may happen that the community leaders are investigating a crime and have cursed anyone who has information but does not provide it. Perhaps a person saw the crime. Or perhaps the person only learned about it afterward. Either way, if he hears the curse but does not testify about what he knows, then he has become guilty of sinning

2Or it may happen that someone touches something impure, whether the impure dead body of a wild animal, the impure dead body of a domesticated animal, or the impure dead body of a swarming, winged insect. Even if the individual was unaware of touching the impure thing, when the person realizes that he has done so, he becomes impure and legally guilty.

3Or that person might touch something unclean that comes from a human source or any other unclean thing that might cause a person to become unclean. Even if the individual was unaware of touching the unclean thing, when the person realizes that he has done so, he becomes legally guilty.

4Or it may happen that a person makes a solemn promise carelessly and rashly. It does not matter whether the person made the promise with ill intention or with good intention. This instruction concerns any way in which a person might make a solemn promise carelessly or rashly. Even if the individual was unaware of speaking carelessly or rashly when he made the solemn promise, when he realizes that he has done so, he becomes legally guilty.

5Whenever anyone becomes guilty in any of these situations, the individual should confess that he has done wrong. **6**Then the individual should bring the required penalty for his guilt to me, Yahweh, to address the wrongdoing that he has committed. {He should bring} a female flock animal, whether a lamb or a kid, as a purifying sacrifice. When this happens, the priest will be able to offer a sacrifice that I will accept for the sake of the individual. I will remove the guilt of the person's wrongdoing from him and will forgive him.

7But if the individual cannot afford a sheep or a goat, then he should bring two doves or two pigeons to me, Yahweh, as the required penalty for the guilt that he acquired through the wrongdoing that he committed. The priest will offer one of the birds as a purifying sacrifice and the other bird as a wholly burned sacrifice. **8**The individual should bring these two birds to the priest. The priest should first present the bird that will offer as a purifying sacrifice. He should break its neck and twist its head by pinching the bird behind its neck. However, the

priest should not remove the head completely. **9**Then the priest should splatter some of the blood of this first bird on the side of the altar. Next, the priest should wring out any remaining blood of the bird on the base of the altar. This is the way to offer a bird as a purifying sacrifice. **10**Then the priest should prepare the second bird as a wholly burned sacrifice, according to the instructions that I have commanded. When this happens, the priest will have offered a sacrifice that I, Yahweh, will accept for the sake of the individual. I will remove from him the guilt that the individual acquired through the wrongdoing that he has done, and I will forgive that individual for his wrongdoing.

11But if the individual cannot afford the two doves or the two pigeons, then he should bring about two liters of wheat flour as his offering for the wrongdoing that he committed. This offering of wheat flour will serve as a restoring sacrifice. The individual should not pour any oil onto it, nor should he put a lump of incense on it, because it is intended to be a purifying sacrifice. **12**The individual should bring the wheat flour to the priest. Then, taking as large a handful as he is able, the priest should scoop out of the offering the portion that he will burn. The priest should then burn that portion on the altar, on top of the other gifts that individuals have offered to me, Yahweh, doing it in a way that causes smoke to go up. This is the way to offer wheat flour as a purifying sacrifice. **13**When this happens, the priest will have offered a sacrifice that I, Yahweh, will accept for the sake of the individual. I will remove the guilt of the individual's wrongdoing from him that he acquired through the wrongdoing that he committed regarding these specific situations. Then, I will forgive the individual for his wrongdoing. The portion of the wheat flour that is not burned completely on the altar belongs to the priest {for food} just like the remaining portions of grain offerings.

14Then Yahweh told Moses, **15**"It may happen that someone breaks one of the commandments that I have given to the people of Israel and unintentionally desecrates the sacred space where I live or the sacred items that are devoted to me, Yahweh. If that happens, that individual should bring the required penalty for his guilt to me, Yahweh. {He should bring} a totally healthy goat as a restoring sacrifice. The individual should determine the worth of the goat in silver according to the official standard for the weight of silver that priests dedicate to me in the sacred tent. **16**The individual should also repay the value of the sacred item that he desecrated. He should add one-fifth of the value of that sacred object to his sacrifice and give the full amount of silver to the priest. When this happens, the priest will be able to offer the ram that the individual is offering as a restoring sacrifice. The priest will offer this sacrifice in a way that I will accept for the sake of the individual. And I will remove the guilt of the individual's wrongdoing from him. I will also forgive the individual for his unintentional wrongdoing.

17Or it may happen that someone does wrong against me and does something that I, Yahweh, specifically commanded that my people not to do. Even if the individual did not know that he had done wrong, nonetheless, he has become legally guilty. He is responsible for his guilt. **18**The individual should bring a totally healthy male goat to the priest in order to offer a restoring sacrifice. He should also determine its value in silver. When this happens, the priest will be able to offer a sacrifice that I will accept for the sake of the individual. I will remove the guilt of the individual's unintentional wrongdoing that he committed (even though he himself did not know that he had done wrong). Then, I will forgive the individual for his wrongdoing. **19**This is how an individual should offer a restoring sacrifice. That person is certainly legally guilty in my eyes."

Chapter 6

1Then Yahweh told Moses, **2**"It may happen that a person does wrong and breaks one of the commandments that I, Yahweh, have given to the people of Israel. He might deceive another Israelite by failing to fulfill an oath that he swore he would keep by receiving a deposit or a pledge. Or {he might deceive another Israelite} by stealing his property or by extorting money from him. **3**Or {he might mistreat another Israelite} by finding someone's lost property and then lying about it. If someone does any of these various things that people do wrong, he has taken an oath falsely. **4**If this happens, when the person does wrong in any of these ways and becomes guilty, then he should first return the property that he stole or repay the money that he extorted from another Israelite. Or {if he received a deposit,} he should return the deposit that another Israelite gave to him as a sign that he would fulfill the oath between them. Or {if he found someone's lost property,} he should return the lost property. **5**This same principle applies for any other way in which a person might swear an oath falsely. That person should restore the full monetary value of whatever he has stolen or found or the amount that he withheld. Moreover, he should add a

fifth of that monetary value to the total amount. He should give the money to whomever the amount properly belongs on the day that he recognizes that he is guilty of wrongdoing. **6**Then, to the precincts of the sacred tent where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelites, that individual should bring an animal to sacrifice. He should offer the animal as a purifying sacrifice. To offer this sacrifice, he should bring a totally healthy male ram to the priest from the flock animals that he owns. He should also determine its monetary value in silver. **7**When this happens, the priest will be able to offer in my presence a sacrifice that I, Yahweh, will accept for the sake of the individual. And I will remove the guilt of the individual's wrongdoing. I will also forgive the individual for whatever way he becomes guilty out of all the ways that people acquire guilt."

8Then Yahweh told Moses, **9**"Make sure that Aaron and his sons know that this is the way that a person should offer a wholly burned sacrifice. This kind of sacrifice must remain on the burning fire that is on the altar throughout the entire night. You should make sure that the fire on the altar is always burning. **10**{In the morning,} make sure that the priest puts on his linen coat and that he wears his linen undergarments on his bare skin. Then he should remove the ashes from the fat of other sacrifices that have accumulated where the fire has totally burned the sacrifices that are left on the altar. The priest should put the ashes in a pile beside the altar. **11**After he has done this, the priest should remove those sacred linen clothes and put on other, everyday clothes. Then he should take the ashes outside of the camp and dispose of them in a place that is ceremonially clean. {This is so that the impurities of these parts of the animal do not cause the people to become impure accidentally}. **12**Now, make sure that the fire on the altar is always burning. It must never go out. Rather, each and every morning, the priest should put more firewood on the fire. Then he should arrange more offerings on the fire. He should burn the fat of the fellowship sacrifices on that fire, doing it in a way that causes smoke to go up. **13**Make sure that the fire on the altar is continually burning. Remember, it must never go out!

14And this is the way a person should offer a grain offering. The descendants of Aaron who are priests should present this kind of sacrifice in the precincts of the sacred tent where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelites, in front of the altar {that is at the entrance of the sacred tent}. **15**Then, with as large a handful as he can pick up, the priest should scoop out of the offering a handful of the wheat flour with its olive oil, as well as all the incense that is on the offering. The priest should burn the portion of the offering that he scooped out with his hand. He should burn it in a way that causes smoke to go up on the altar. I, Yahweh, will enjoy the smell of the smoke of the offering. **16**Aaron and his sons who are priests may eat the rest of the grain offerings that you offer to me, to Yahweh. They should eat any unleavened loaf of bread in a sacred place, inside the courtyard of the sacred tent. **17**Make sure that no one offers a grain offering that consists of a loaf of bread that he made with leaven. I have given this part of the grain offerings to the priests as their portion of the gifts that people offer to me. Out of all those gifts, the portion of the sacrifice that the priests keep for themselves for food is specially set apart. It is separated from all the sacred gifts that people offer to me, just like the priests' portions of the purifying sacrifices and the priests' portions of the restoring sacrifices. **18**Any male descendant of Aaron may eat these portions of the sacrifices. In fact, this practice is a permanent and enduring part of the portion of the gifts that people offer to me, to Yahweh, which belongs to the priests for every generation of the people of Israel. {These gifts are so sacred that} whoever or whatever touches them becomes just as sacred as the gifts themselves."

19Then Yahweh told Moses, **20**"On the day when one of the male descendants of Aaron is consecrated as a priest, this is what he should offer. He should present to me, to Yahweh, about two liters of wheat flour, constituting a grain offering that will always be in my presence. {He should bring} half of the wheat flour in the morning and half of the wheat flour in the evening. **21**The priest who offers the grain offering should pan-fry the wheat flour on a griddle in olive oil after having combined it with the oil. He should then offer the broken pieces of the offering. {He should burn them on the altar in a way that causes smoke to go up so that} I, Yahweh, will enjoy the smell of the smoke of the offering. **22**The high priest who is in line to succeed the current high priest should perform the grain offering in this way. These instructions are a permanent and enduring regulation. Make sure that the priests burn these kinds of sacrifices in their entirety in a way that causes smoke to go up to me, to Yahweh. **23**The priests should offer every part of these grain offerings. No priest should eat any portion of this particular sacrifice."

24Then Yahweh told Moses **25**to tell Aaron and his sons, "This is the way a person should offer a purifying sacrifice. The individual should kill the animal that an individual selects for this kind of sacrifice at the same place where individuals kill the animals that someone might offer as a wholly burned sacrifice. This location is within the

precincts of the sacred tent where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelites. Aaron and his descendants should consider this kind of sacrifice as specially set apart for the priests among all the sacred offerings that people offer to me that are set apart for me. **26**The priest who performs the purifying sacrifice may eat its meat. However, the priest should only eat it in the place in the courtyard of the sacred tent that the priests have set apart for such sacred acts. **27**{The meat of these sacrifices is so sacred that} whoever or whatever touches the meat of the sacrifice becomes just as sacred as the meat itself. And whoever splatters the blood of the purifying sacrifice on any clothing should wash the spots where the blood came into contact with the clothing. They should wash their clothing in a location that the priests have set apart for such sacred acts. **28**If the priest boils the meat of the purifying sacrifice in a pot made from clay, the priest must smash the pot afterward. However, if the priest boils the meat in a bronze pot, the priest may thoroughly scrub the pot with scalding water and rinse the pot with water. **29**Any male in a priest's family may eat the boiled meat of the purifying sacrifice. The people should consider that meat to be especially set apart for the priests out of all the gifts that people offer to me, to Yahweh, which are set apart for me. **30**But there is one kind of sacrifice that neither the priests nor their family members should eat. Instead, the priests should completely burn such a sacrifice over the fire. They should not eat any purifying sacrifice that requires the priest to bring some of the blood of the animal into the sacred tent. The priest does this in the sacred space that priests have set apart for such sacred acts in order to offer a sacrifice that I will accept for the sake of an individual.

Chapter 7

1"This is the way a person should offer the restoring sacrifice. The people of Israel should consider this kind of sacrifice as especially set apart among all the sacred offerings that people offer to me that are set apart for me. **2**The people who offer this kind of sacrifice should kill the animal they are presenting in the same place where people might kill the animals people offer as wholly burned sacrifices. Then {after catching the animal's blood in a bowl, the priest} should splatter the blood onto every side of the altar. **3**The individual should present all of the fat that he removed from the animal: the entire portion of the tail fat, the caul fat that covers all the internal organs, **4**both kidneys, and the suet fat that is attached to them near the loin cuts. He should also present the lobes of the lamb's liver, and the kidneys (which the individual should also remove). **5**Then the priest should burn all these portions of fat and internal organs on the altar in a way that causes smoke to go up. Once burned, the fat and the internal organs will become gifts to me, to Yahweh. This is how an individual should offer a restoring sacrifice **6**Any male descendant of Aaron may eat the meat that comes from this sacrifice. However, he should eat it in a place set apart for such purposes. The people of Israel should consider this kind of sacrifice as especially set apart for the priests among all the sacred offerings that people offer to me that are set apart for me.

7The instructions for the restoring sacrifice are just the same as the instructions for the purifying sacrifice. There is one set of instructions for both of them. The meat of the sacrifice belongs to the priest who offers the sacrifice that I will accept for the sake of the individual so that I will remove the individual's sins from him and forgive him for his wrongdoing. **8**As for the priest who offers a wholly burned sacrifice for someone, the skin of the animal that the individual offered belongs to the priest. **9**Every grain offering that someone bakes in an oven, and every sacrifice that someone prepares by deep-frying in a pan or by pan-frying on a griddle also belongs to the priest who offered it for food. It will be his food. **10**Likewise, both the grain offering with olive oil and those without any olive oil belong to every male descendant of Aaron. Every priest is alike in this regard.

11This is how someone should offer any fellowship sacrifice that he wants to offer to me. **12**Someone might want to offer a fellowship sacrifice to express gratitude to me. If so, he should present unleavened loaves of bread that someone made from flour that he mixed with olive oil or unleavened loaves of bread that someone made from fine wheat flour that he mixed with olive oil and coated with oil, a cake soaked with oil. He should present those loaves in addition to the animal sacrifices that accompany the fellowship sacrifices that express gratitude to me. **13**Along with those leavened loaves of bread and the animal sacrifices that regularly accompany any fellowship sacrifice for the purpose of expressing gratitude to me, the individual should offer this grain offering. **14**And from those portions of the sacrifice, the individual should offer a portion of the whole sacrifice as a special contribution to me, to Yahweh. These portions will belong to the priest who splatters the blood of the fellowship sacrifice. It will be his food. **15**As for the meat of the fellowship sacrifice that someone offers for the purpose of expressing gratitude to

me, the priests should eat the meat on the same day that the individual offers it. The priests must not allow any of the meat to remain until the next morning.

16Someone might want to offer a fellowship sacrifice because of a vow that he made to me. Or someone might also want to bring a fellowship sacrifice freely and unprompted. In either case, the priests should eat the meat of the sacrifice on the day that the individual offers the sacrifice. The priests may also eat the remaining meat of the sacrifice throughout the next day. **17**However, the priests must completely burn any remaining meat from the sacrifice on the third day. **18**If, for whatever reason, anyone ever eats the meat from a fellowship sacrifice on the third day after an individual offered it, I will no longer accept whatever sacrifice the individual offered. As for the person who offered the sacrifice, I will not forgive him, because the meat is now considered desecrated. Whoever eats that meat must now be held responsible for addressing his wrongdoing.

19No one should ever eat any meat that comes into contact with anything unclean. The people of Israel should always completely burn contaminated meat. However, anyone who is able to remain clean can eat clean meat. **20**Anyone who has not been able to remain ceremonially clean and still, nonetheless, eats the meat of a fellowship sacrifice, that meat that belongs to me, to Yahweh, alone, that person is now an outcast. The people of Israel should no longer consider that person to be one of my people. **21**Likewise, anyone who comes into contact with anything impure, whether an impure person or an impure domesticated animal or anything impure that I consider to be disgusting and, nonetheless, eats some of the meat of a fellowship sacrifice, the meat that belongs to me, to Yahweh, alone, that person is now an outcast. The people of Israel should no longer consider that person to be one of my people.

22Then Yahweh told Moses **23**to say to the Israelite people, “The people of Israel should never eat any of the fat of bovines or sheep or goats. **24**As for the fat from an animal’s corpse or the fat from an animal that wild animals killed and someone later found it dead, anyone may use these portions of fat for various purposes. However, no one should ever eat this fat. **25**If ever anyone eats the fat from these domesticated animals that people use to offer gifts to me, to Yahweh, that person who ate the fat is now an outcast. The people of Israel should no longer consider that person to be one of my people. **26**And wherever you happen to live, no one should ever eat any blood, whether from a bird or from a domesticated animal. **27**If ever any individual eats any blood, that person is now an outcast. The people of Israel should no longer consider that person to be one of my people.”

28Then Yahweh told Moses, **29**to say to the Israelite people, “Anyone who offers a fellowship sacrifice to me, to Yahweh, should bring part of that sacrifice directly to my presence. **30**He himself should bring the gift that he is offering to me. He should bring the fat along with the meat of the animal’s breast in order to fan it in my presence as a special contribution to me. **31**Then the priest should burn the fat of the animal’s breast meat on the altar in a way that causes smoke to go up. However, the breast meat itself belongs to Aaron and to his male descendants for food. **32**And, as a special contribution, the person offering the fellowship sacrifice should give the animal’s right thigh to the priest who performed the sacrifice. **33**The right thigh belongs to whichever priest, being a male descendant of Aaron, presented the blood and the fat of the fellowship sacrifice. It is his share of food. **34**For, by instructing the people of God to offer sacrifices in this manner, I have taken the breast meat of the sacrifice that the priest fans in my presence and the special contribution of the right thigh from the people of Israel, from their fellowship sacrifices, and I have given these special portions to Aaron the priest and to his male descendants. These instructions teach that the people of Israel should always provide portion of food for the priests.”

35Those are the allotments that belong to Aaron and the allotments that belong to his male descendants from the gifts that people offer to Yahweh. Yahweh commanded these instructions on the day that Moses presented Aaron and his sons to serve as priests to Yahweh. **36**Yahweh made sure to give these instructions and regulations to the priests on the day that Moses anointed them and set them apart from the people of Israel. These portions of the sacrifices are a permanent and enduring regulation that the people of Israel and all their descendants should always observe.

37So, those are the ways in which people should offer the wholly burned sacrifices, the grain offerings, the purifying sacrifices, the restoring sacrifices, the appointing sacrifices, and the fellowship sacrifices. **38**Yahweh made

sure that Moses received all these instructions and regulations on Mount Sinai on the day that Yahweh commanded the people of Israel to begin offering their sacrifices to Yahweh in the desert wilderness around Sinai.

Chapter 8

1Then Yahweh told Moses, **2**"Bring Aaron and his sons, their special clothes, the oil that you will use to anoint them, the bull that you will offer as a purifying offering, the two rams that you will also offer, and a basket that contains some bread that you have baked without leaven. **3**Then gather all the people together at the entrance to the sacred tent." **4**Moses did exactly what Yahweh told him to do, and all the people gathered together at the entrance of the sacred tent.

5Then Moses said to the whole people, "This is what Yahweh has told us to do." **6**Moses then brought forth Aaron and his sons, and he washed them thoroughly. **7**Moses put the embroidered tunic on Aaron, tied the waistband around him, and clothed him with the outer garment and the priests' sacred apron. He tied the carefully woven belt of the sacred apron around him, and so, clothed him in the priests' sacred clothing. **8**He placed the chest pouch that attaches to the apron on Aaron's chest and put into it the {two stones called} the Urim and the Thummim. **9**Then Moses wrapped the turban around Aaron's head and fastened the golden flower-shaped plate, that sacred crown that demonstrates that Aaron serves Yahweh alone, to the front of the turban, exactly as Yahweh told Moses to do.

10Then Moses took the olive oil that he was to use for dedicating people and objects to Yahweh, and he poured it out on the sacred tent and everything that was in it. By doing this, he set the entire space and everything in it apart and dedicated them wholly to Yahweh and his purposes. **11**Then Moses flicked some of the sacred oil on the altar seven times. He anointed the altar and all the tools that accompanied the altar, its washbasin, and its stand so that he could dedicate them wholly to Yahweh and his purposes. **12**He poured out on Aaron's head some of the sacred olive oil that he was to use to dedicate people and objects wholly to Yahweh and so, he anointed him in order to set him apart and dedicate him wholly to Yahweh and to his purposes. **13**Then Moses brought forth Aaron's sons, and he clothed them with the embroidered tunics, tied the waistbands around them, and wrapped the headbands on their heads, exactly as Yahweh told Moses to do.

14Then Moses brought into the sacred tent the bull that he would offer as a purifying offering. Aaron and his sons placed their hands on the animal's head. **15**Then Aaron and his sons killed the bull, {and, after collecting some of its blood in a bowl,} Moses took the blood, and, using his finger, put some of it on every one of the four projected corners of the altar. By doing this, Moses purified the altar from the impurity of sin. The rest of the blood Moses poured out on the base of the altar, and so, he set the altar apart and dedicated it as a suitable place on which to offer sacrifices that would remove people's sins from them and restore them to relationship with Yahweh. **16**Then Moses took all the visceral fat that was attached to the internal organs, the lobes of the bull's liver, the two kidneys, and their suet fat. He completely burned these internal organs and fat portions on the altar in a way that caused smoke to go up. **17**Another Israelite then completely burned the rest of the bull that Aaron and his sons had killed, including its skin, its other internal organs, and its excrement at a {clean place} outside the camp, exactly as Yahweh told Moses to do.

18Then Moses presented the ram that he was going to offer as a wholly burned sacrifice, and Aaron and his sons placed their hands on its head. **19**Then, Aaron and his sons killed the ram, and Moses, {after collecting some of the ram's blood in a bowl,} flicked some of the blood on every side of the altar. **20**After Aaron and his sons cut the ram into its appropriate portions, Moses burned the head, the portions of meat, and all the suet of the bull on the altar in a way that caused smoke to go up. **21**But the internal organs and the legs of the bull Aaron and his sons thoroughly washed before Moses also burned these on the altar in the same manner. In doing so, Moses fulfilled the requirements for offering a wholly burned sacrifice. Yahweh enjoyed the smell of the smoke, and he considered the sacrifice to be a gift, exactly as he had told Moses to do.

22Then Moses presented the second ram, the one that Moses would offer to appoint the priests and dedicate them as priests to Yahweh, and Aaron and his sons placed their hands on its head. **23**Aaron and his sons slaughtered the ram. After Moses {caught some of its blood in a bowl,} he took the blood and daubed some of it on Aaron—on the lobe of his right ear, the thumb of his right hand, and the big toe of his right foot. **24**Moses then took Aaron's sons and did the same, daubing blood on them as well. {He did this to set their ears, their hands, and their feet apart for service to Yahweh alone.} Then Moses splashed the remaining blood on every side of the altar. **25**Moses took the intestinal fat of the ram, including the tail fat and all the visceral that was attached to the intestines. He also took the lobes of the ram's liver, the two kidneys and their suet fat, and the right thigh. **26**Then Moses took a loaf of unleavened bread, a loaf of unleavened bread that he had covered in olive oil, and a cracker from the basket that was in Yahweh's presence. He put these items on the fat portions and the right thigh of the ram that Aaron and his sons had killed. **27**Moses placed all of these sacrifices into the upturned, open hands of Aaron and his sons, who held them up and moved them about in Yahweh's presence. **28**Then Moses took all those things from the upturned, open hands of Aaron and his sons, and completely burned them on the altar, on top of the sacrifices that Moses was already burning, in a way that caused smoke to go up. By offering these items in this way, the sacrifice fulfilled the requirements for the appointing sacrifice. Yahweh enjoyed the smell of the smoke, and he considered this sacrifice to be a gift to him. **29**Moses then also took the breast meat from the second ram that Aaron and his sons offered as an appointing sacrifice. He held it up and moved it about in Yahweh's presence in the precincts of the sacred tent as a special contribution to Yahweh. The breast meat belonged to Moses as his allotted share of food, exactly as Yahweh told Moses.

30Next, Moses took some of the olive oil that he used for anointing Aaron and his sons, and some of the blood that he had previously placed on the altar. He flicked both the blood and the olive oil on Aaron and his sons and on all their clothes {in order to cleanse them from the impurity of sin}. By doing this, he set apart Aaron, his sons, and all their clothing for service to Yahweh and dedicated them wholly to Yahweh.

31Then Moses said to Aaron and his sons, "Boil the meat of the second ram at the entrance of the sacred tent. You should eat it there with the bread that is in the basket that you are using for the appointing sacrifice, exactly as I told you to do when I said that Aaron and his sons should eat the bread and the meat of the ram. **32**Make sure you completely burn any of the meat and bread that remains after you are finished eating. **33**You should not leave the entrance of the sacred tent for seven days, until the day when your appointing ceremony is over. You should do this because Yahweh will give you the responsibilities of the priesthood over the course of the seven-day period. **34**Yahweh told you to do all these things exactly as you have done them today in order to restore you to relationship with Yahweh. **35**Again, make sure you remain in the entrance of the sacred tent from day to night for an entire week and carefully avoid exactly what Yahweh has told you to avoid. If you are careful to do this, Yahweh will not kill you, because Yahweh himself told me to do these things."

36So, Aaron and his sons did everything that Yahweh told them through Moses.

Chapter 9

1Eight days later, Moses summoned Aaron, his sons, and the oldest and most respected people of Israel. **2**He said to Aaron, "Take a totally healthy calf from the domesticated bulls that you own and offer it as a purifying sacrifice along with a totally healthy ram that you will offer as a wholly burned sacrifice. Present these animals to Yahweh. **3**Then tell the Israelite people to take a male goat and offer it as a purifying sacrifice, along with a calf and a lamb that they will offer as a wholly burned sacrifice. Tell them to make sure that both animals are a year old and totally healthy. **4**Also tell the Israelite people to take an ox and a ram and offer them as fellowship sacrifices when they sacrifice in Yahweh's presence. They should offer these animals along with a grain offering that consists of wheat flour that they have combined with olive oil. Tell them that they should bring these offerings because Yahweh himself is going to appear to them today."

5{After Aaron relayed these instructions to the Israelite people,} the people brought before the sacred tent everything that Moses told them to bring. Then all the people presented the animals and the offerings, and they

stood together in Yahweh's presence. **6**Then Moses said, "This is exactly what Yahweh told you to do. Now you will see how glorious he is."

7Then Moses said to Aaron, "Approach the altar and perform the purifying sacrifice and the wholly burned sacrifice that Yahweh told you to offer. Do this so that Yahweh will remove your sins from you and restore you and the people to relationship with him. Then perform the sacrifices that Yahweh told the people to offer. Do this so that Yahweh will remove the peoples' sins from them and restore them to relationship with him. Perform these sacrifices exactly as Yahweh instructed."

8So Aaron approached the altar and killed the calf that he would offer as a purifying sacrifice {to cleanse the holy space dedicated to Yahweh from the impurity of his own sin}. **9**Then, {after they collected some of the calf's blood in a bowl,} Aaron's sons presented the blood to their father. Aaron dipped one of his fingers into the blood and applied some of it to the four projections on the corners of the altar. He poured the rest of the blood onto the base of the altar. **10**He then burned the calf's fat, including the kidneys and the lobe of the liver of the calf that Aaron sacrificed as a purifying sacrifice, on the altar in a way that caused smoke to go up Aaron did this exactly as Yahweh told Moses. **11**But someone else completely burned the rest of the calf's meat and its skin {at a clean place} outside of the camp.

12Then Aaron killed the ram that he was going to offer as a wholly burned sacrifice. {After collecting some of the blood of the ram,} his sons brought him some of the blood, and he splattered it on every side of the altar. **13**Then, {after cutting the ram into its appropriate portions,} Aaron's sons brought him the appropriate portions of the ram's meat, fat, and internal organs, including the animal's head. Aaron burned them on the altar in a way that caused smoke to go up. **14**Then Aaron washed the ram's intestines and legs, and he burned them on the altar in a way that caused smoke to go up. He placed them on top of the other portions of the sacrifices that he was already burning on the altar.

15Then Aaron brought the animals that the Israelite people offered to Yahweh. He took the goat that the people required for their purifying sacrifice, and he killed it. By offering it, Aaron cleansed the people from the impurity of their sin, just as he had done with the goat that he offered for himself.

16In this way, he presented the animal that the people required for their sacrifice. Aaron offered this sacrifice in the way that Yahweh had instructed Moses. **17**Then Aaron presented the offering that consisted of a sacrifice of harvested grain. He took a handful of it and burned it on the altar in a way that caused smoke to go up, in addition to the animal sacrifices that he had prepared and completely burned on the altar in the morning.

18Then Aaron killed the ox and the ram that the Israelite people required for their sacrifice that promised friendship with Yahweh. {After catching some of the blood of the animals,} his sons brought him the blood, and he flicked the blood against every side of the altar. **19**He took the fat portions from the ox and the ram, including their fatty tails, their visceral fat that was attached to the animals' internal organs, their kidneys, and the lobes of their livers. **20**Then his sons placed all these portions of fat and internal organs on top of the breast meat of those animals, and Aaron burned these portions on the altar in a way that caused smoke to go up. **21**Next, Aaron fanned the breast meat and the right thigh of those animals in Yahweh's presence, exactly as Yahweh told Moses.

22When he had finished offering all the sacrifices, Aaron lifted his hands over the people, and he asked Yahweh to bless them. Then, he came down from the altar where he had offered the purifying sacrifices, the wholly burned sacrifices, and the fellowship sacrifices that he and the people had required.

23Then Moses and Aaron entered into the Holy Place in the sacred tent. When they came out later, they asked Yahweh to bless the people again. When they did this, all the people saw how glorious Yahweh was. **24**Fire came out from the sacred precincts, where Yahweh lived among the Israelites, and completely burned everything that was on the altar, including the wholly burned offerings and all the portions of fat. When all the people saw this happen, they shouted joyfully and bowed themselves down on the ground to worship Yahweh.

Chapter 10

1Two of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, took the pans in which they burned incense. They put some burning coals
in them and put incense on top of the coals. They offered this fire {and incense} to Yahweh, {but the fire was not
acceptable to Yahweh because} it was not the kind that he had commanded them to burn. **2**Flames shot out from
the precincts of the sacred tent where Yahweh lived among the Israelites, and the fire burned up Aaron's two sons,
Nadab and Abihu. The fire killed them right in Yahweh's presence. **3**Moses turned and said to Aaron, "These events
are exactly what Yahweh spoke of when he said,

'In the presence of the holy priests who draw near to me,

I will demonstrate that I am set apart from everything else;

in the sight of everyone,

I will demonstrate that I should always be honored and worshiped.'"

But Aaron was silent and said nothing.

4So Moses summoned Mishael and Elzaphan, Aaron's cousins, the sons of Aaron's uncle, Uzziel. Moses said to
them, "Offer yourselves for service and carry the corpses of your relatives from the front of the Holy Place in the
sacred tent. Bring them to a place outside the camp." **5**So Aaron's cousins stepped forward and carried the two
corpses of Aaron's sons in the folds of their embroidered tunics. They carried them to a place outside the camp,
exactly as Moses told them to do.

6Then Moses said to Aaron and his two remaining sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, "Do not mourn for your brothers as is
customary. You should not allow your hair to hang down, nor should you tear your clothing. If you do, Yahweh may
also kill you, and his anger may extend to the whole congregation as well. However, your fellow Israelites, every
single person, should mourn because Yahweh is angry with his priests, as his burning fire has demonstrated.
7However, make sure that you do not leave the entrance of the sacred tent. If you do so, Yahweh will kill you too.
You should not forget that when I poured Yahweh's holy oil on your heads, Yahweh set you apart to serve him
here." So, Aaron and his remaining sons did everything that Moses told them to do.

8Then Yahweh said to Aaron, **9**"You and your two sons who are still alive should not drink wine or beer before you
enter the sacred tent. If you drink alcohol before you enter the sacred precincts where Yahweh lives among the
Israelites, Yahweh will kill you. This practice is a permanent and enduring instruction for how the priests should
behave, which applies to every generation of the people of Israel. **10**As priests, you should learn how to distinguish
what is set apart for Yahweh and his purposes from that which you may use for everyday, common purposes. You
will also be able to distinguish what is unacceptable to Yahweh and unclean from that which is acceptable to
Yahweh and clean. **11**By learning how to distinguish these things from one another, the whole people of Israel will
learn how to follow all the instructions that I told Moses, who then told them to you."

12Moses then said to Aaron and his remaining two sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, "Take whatever grain offering now
remains after Aaron has burned the gifts that he offered to Yahweh on the altar and eat the unleavened loaves of
bread next to the altar. You should eat it here because these leftovers are set apart for the priests among all the
gifts that people offer to Yahweh and that are set apart for him. **13**Make sure that you eat these leftovers in the
place that priests have dedicated for such purposes. You should do this because these leftovers are the food that
Yahweh has provided for you and for your children from all the gifts that people offer to Yahweh that are also set
apart for himself. It is so because Yahweh has told me that this is what you should do. **14**You and your children may
eat the breast meat that was held up and moved about in Yahweh's presence and the meat of the right thigh that
people have offered as a special contribution to Yahweh. You and your children should eat these portions of meat
in any place that the priests have set apart for such holy purposes. Yahweh has given them to you and to your
children as your portion of food that comes from the fellowship sacrifices that people offer to Yahweh. **15**In
addition to the other fat portions that people offer to Yahweh, the priests should bring the meat of the right thigh
that people have offered as a special contribution to Yahweh and the breast meat to hold them up and move them

about in Yahweh's presence. Remember that these portions of meat are food for you and for your children. These instructions should be perpetual and enduring, exactly as Yahweh has told you to do.

16After asking about the location of the goat that the priests had offered as a purifying sacrifice, Moses diligently looked for it. He discovered that the priests had mistakenly burned it completely on the altar when they ought to have eaten it. So Moses was very angry with Aaron's two remaining sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, and asked them, **17**"Why did you not eat the meat of the purifying sacrifice in a location that the priests have set apart for such holy purposes? You should have considered that meat to be specifically dedicated for you among all the gifts that people offer to Yahweh that are also set apart for him! Yahweh gave that meat to you not only so that you could eat it, but also so that it would address the wrongdoing of the whole congregation. When you ate that meat in Yahweh's presence, he was going to forgive the whole congregation for their sins and restore their relationship with him! **18**Consider this: the sacrifice was not the type of purifying sacrifice that required the priest to bring any blood into the inner portion of the Holy Place in the sacred tent! You should certainly have eaten it in the place that the priests have set apart for such holy purposes, exactly as I told you to do!"

19But Aaron replied, "Consider this: today, my sons brought their purifying sacrifices and their wholly burned sacrifices to Yahweh in the precincts where he lives among the Israelite people. Yet, nonetheless, these horrible things have happened to me! Even if I myself had eaten the meat of the purifying sacrifice today, would Yahweh have approved of everything that has happened here today, even the death of my sons?" **20**When Moses heard Aaron's response, he was satisfied and said nothing further.

Chapter 11

1Then Yahweh spoke to Aaron and Moses. He said, **2**"Tell the people of Israel that, out of all the animals that live on dry land, the following animals are the ones that they may eat. **3**{This is the rule:} any animal that has hooves (and those hooves are completely cloven) and also rechews partially digested food—these are the types of animals that are acceptable to eat.

4However, there are some animals that have one of these traits but not both. These types of animals are not acceptable to eat. For example, camels {are not acceptable to eat} because, while they chew the cud, they do not have a completely cloven hoof. The people of Israel should consider any animal like this to be impure and unacceptable for eating. **5**Likewise, rock badgers are not acceptable to eat because, while they rechew partially digested food, they do not have completely cloven hooves, {because they do not have hooves at all}. The people of Israel should also consider any animal like this to be impure and unacceptable to eat. **6**Rabbits also are unacceptable to eat because, while they rechew partially digested food, they do not have completely cloven hooves, {because they also do not have hooves at all}. The people of Israel should also consider any animal like a rabbit to be impure and unacceptable to eat. **7**Pigs are likewise unacceptable to eat because, while they have hooves (and those hooves are completely cloven), they do not bring up the cud. Because of this, the people of Israel should also consider any animal like a pig to be impure and not acceptable to eat. **8**No Israelite should ever eat any meat from these animals. They should not even touch their dead bodies. Rather, the people of Israel should consider all of these types of animals to be impure and unacceptable to eat.

9Now, out of all the types of creatures that live in water, these are the ones that the people of Israel may eat. {This is the rule:} The people of Israel may eat anything that lives in water that has both fins and scales, whether in the ocean or in a freshwater stream. **10**However, there are many animals that live in the ocean or in freshwater streams but do not have both fins and scales. Whether they are smaller, swarming creatures or larger ones, these types of creatures should disgust the people of Israel. They should consider them to be completely unacceptable to eat. **11**Because these creatures should disgust the people of Israel, the people of Israel should never eat meat from any of these creatures. Their dead bodies should also disgust them. **12**Once again, {this is the rule:} the people of Israel should consider any creature that lives in the water but does not have both fins and scales to be disgusting. They should consider this kind of animal to be completely unacceptable to eat.

13-14 Now, these are some examples of the types of birds that should disgust the people of Israel. They should never eat these birds but rather consider them disgusting. These birds include predatory birds of large to medium size that sometimes eat dead animals. **15-19**In addition to those types of birds of prey, such as hawks {the people of Israel should consider disgusting} all birds that inhabit desolate places. These might include birds such as owls, ostriches, and even bats. Likewise, the people of Israel should avoid certain waterbirds of large to medium size, specifically those that wade or hunt in water. Finally, any birds that occupy or hunt near excrement, such as hoopoes, should disgust the people of Israel. {These are the types of birds that the people of Israel should consider completely unacceptable for eating.}

20The people of Israel should also consider any kind of flying insect that swarms and has four legs to be disgusting and completely unacceptable to eat. **21**However, the people of Israel may eat any flying insect that both swarms and has four legs, if its legs are jointed and the insect jumps about on the ground. **22**For example, these are some examples of the types of insects that the people of Israel may eat. They may eat any kind of locust, any kind of bald locust, any kind of cricket, and any kind of grasshopper. **23**But the people of Israel should consider any other winged insect that swarms and also has four legs to be disgusting and completely unacceptable to eat.

24These types of unacceptable and impure animals and insects will make the people of Israel impure. Anyone who touches their dead bodies will make themself impure {so that they cannot touch sacred objects or enter into holy space} until the evening of the day when they touched one of these animals or insects. **25**Anyone who picks up one of their dead bodies should wash his clothes to purify himself from the impurity of the dead animal or insect. That person will be impure {and should not touch sacred objects or enter into holy space} until the evening of the day when he touched the dead animal or insect.

26Remember, the people of Israel should consider impure and unacceptable any animal that, while having hooves, does not have completely cloven hooves or does not also chew the cud. Anyone who touches one of these animals will make themself impure as well. **27**Likewise, out of all the animals that have four legs, the people of Israel should consider any animal that has paws to be impure and unacceptable to eat. Anyone who touches the dead body of one of these animals will make themself impure {and should not touch any other person or any sacred object or enter into any sacred space} until the evening of the day when he touched the dead animal. **28**Anyone who picks up one of the dead bodies of any of these animals should wash his clothes {to purify themself from the impurity of the animal's dead body}. That person will be impure {and so should not touch other people or sacred objects or enter into any sacred space} until the evening of the day when they touched the animal's dead body. For this reason, the people of Israel should consider these animals to be impure and not acceptable to eat.

29Out of all the animals that swarm on the ground, these are the ones that the people of Israel should consider to be impure: rats, mice, any kind of large lizard, **30**geckos, spotted lizards, newts, skinks, and chameleons.
31Remember, out of all the animals that swarm, the people of Israel should consider these types of animals to be impure and unacceptable to eat. Anyone who touches one of them after it has died will make themself impure {so that person should not touch anyone else or any sacred object or enter into any sacred space} until the evening of the day when he touched the animal's dead body. **32**Likewise, it may happen that one of these impure animals or insects falls onto something after it has died. If this happens, that object will become impure. Whether it is wood, cloth, leather, or burlap, if it is something that the people of Israel use for domestic purposes, whoever owns the object should soak it in water. The people of Israel should consider the object to be impure until the evening of the day on which the animal's dead body fell onto it. After that evening, whoever owns the object should consider it be to clean {and acceptable to use for its intended purpose}. **33**It may happen that one of these impure animals or insects falls into a clay pot. If this happens, the people of Israel should consider everything in the pot to be impure. Whoever owns the pot should shatter it. **34**It may also happen that the water from a clay pot into which an impure animal or insect has fallen happens to come into contact with anything edible. If this happens, that food will also be impure {and no one should eat it}. This is because once an impure animal or insect comes into contact with any drinkable liquid that is in a pot, that liquid also becomes impure. **35**Any object onto which the dead body of any of these impure animals or insects falls will also become impure. Whether the dead body falls onto an oven or a small stove, whoever owns the object should smash it to pieces. The people of Israel should consider that object to be impure and unacceptable for its original intended purpose. It will not cease to be impure but will remain impure.

36However, {it may happen that the dead body of one of these impure animals or insects falls into} a spring or any large system for collecting and storing water. If this happens, the water that comes out of it is still pure. {The people of Israel may drink it}. Nonetheless, anyone who touches one of those dead bodies will still become impure.
37Likewise, it may happen that the dead body of one of these impure animals or insects happens to fall onto any plantable seeds that someone was going to plant. If this happens, those seeds are still pure. {Whoever owns them may still plant them.} **38**Alternatively, it may happen that the dead body of one of these impure animals or insects falls on those seeds after whoever planted the seeds has watered them. If this happens, then the people of Israel could consider those seeds to be impure and unacceptable.

39It may happen that an animal that the people of Israel may eat dies and someone touches it. If this happens, whoever has touched it has made himself impure {so that he should not touch another person or any sacred object or enter into any sacred space} until the evening of the day when he touched the animal's dead body.
40Furthermore, anyone who eats any meat from the animal's dead body should wash his clothes {to purify them}. He has made himself impure until the evening of the day when he ate the animal's meat. Likewise, anyone who carries the animal's dead body should wash his clothes {to purify them}. He has made himself impure until the evening of the day when he carried the animal's dead body.

41The Israelite people should consider any animals or insects that swarm on the ground to be disgusting and completely unacceptable to eat. No Israelite should ever eat these animals. **42**This means that no Israelite should ever eat any animal that crawls on its belly and also has four legs or any animal that has many legs, like a swarming ground-dwelling insect. This is because the Israelite people should consider these animals and insects to be disgusting and completely unacceptable to eat. **43**The Israelite people should never make themselves disgusting by eating or touching any of these swarming insects or animals. Neither should they make themselves impure or defile themselves by touching or eating them. **44**Remember who I am: I am Yahweh your God, and I am holy. The people of Israel must likewise be holy people because I am holy. Do not cause yourselves to become impure by eating or touching swarming animals or insects that crawl along the ground. **45**Remember that I, Yahweh, freed the Israelite people when they were slaves in Egypt. I did this so that I could be their God. Therefore, because I am holy, they should be holy people.

46These are the instructions for how the people of Israel should handle domestic animals, birds, any swarming fish that live in water, or any swarming insects or animals that live on dry land. **47**The people of Israel should learn to distinguish what is unacceptable to me and impure from that which is acceptable to me and pure. This means that they should also learn to distinguish those living creatures that are acceptable to eat from those that are unacceptable to eat."

Chapter 12

1Then Yahweh told Moses **2**"Tell the people of Israel that when a woman is pregnant and gives birth to a boy, she has become impure for seven days. This is just like when she becomes impure from her regular menstruation; she has become impure. **3**She should make sure that the priests circumcise her baby boy eight days after he is born.
4Then the woman should wait about a month in the impurity of the blood she bled from giving birth. During this time, she should not touch sacred objects or enter into holy space, like the sacred tent, until that time is over. **5**But if a woman gives birth to a baby girl, she has become impure for two weeks. This is just like when she is menstruating each month. The woman should wait about two months in the impurity of the blood she bled when she gave birth to the baby.

6After the time in which she is waiting to purify herself is over, that woman should bring a one-year-old lamb to the priest at the entrance of the sacred tent. She should do this whether she gives birth to a baby boy or a baby girl. The priest should offer the lamb as a wholly burned sacrifice. The woman should also bring a dove or a pigeon to the priest. He should offer it as a purifying sacrifice. {This will purify her and allow her to be pure again before me.}
7The priest should offer these animals in my presence in the sacred tent. When this happens, I will accept her again and purify her from the impurity of the blood that she bled when she gave birth to the baby.

This is the way that women who give birth, whether to a baby boy or girl, should offer sacrifices to purify themselves from the impurity of the blood that they bleed when they give birth to their children. **8**However, if any woman cannot afford a lamb, then she may bring two pigeons or two doves. The priest should offer one of the birds as a wholly burned sacrifice and the other as a purifying sacrifice. When the priest offers these birds, I will accept the woman again, and I will purify her from the impurity of the blood that she bled when she gave birth to her children."

Chapter 13

1Then Yahweh told Aaron and Moses, **2**"It may happen that someone finds a raised area, a protective crust, or a discolored spot on their skin. If their skin looks infected, like it may be an infectious skin disease, then someone should bring the infected person to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons or descendants, who are also priests. **3**The priest should examine the person's infected skin. The priest should look to see if the hair on the infection is white and if the infection itself appears to be under their skin. If it is, then that infection is a symptom of an infectious skin disease. When the priest sees this kind of infection, he should judge the infected person to be impure. {The impure person should not touch other people or sacred objects or enter sacred space.} **4**However, the priest might see that the discolored spot on the person's skin is white. He may also see that the infection is only skin-deep, and the hair on the infected spot is not white. If the priest sees this kind of infection, then he should quarantine the person with the infection for one week. **5**On the last day of that week, the priest should examine the infected person again. Indeed, if the priest can see that the infection is still there, but it has not spread on the person's skin, then the priest should quarantine the infected person for another week. **6**On the last day of that second week, the priest should examine the infected person again. This time, he should look to see if the infection has spread on the skin. If it has not, but rather the infection has receded and is now fainter in color, then the priest should judge the infected person to be pure. {That person may now touch other people and sacred objects and enter sacred space.} The infection is just a benign scab. The person with the infection should wash and clean his clothes, and then he will be pure. **7**However, it may happen that the scab spreads aggressively on the skin after the priest has examined the infected person and judged them to be pure. If this happens, then the person with the infection must go and show himself to the priest again. **8**The priest should then examine the person with the infection. The priest should determine that the scab has really spread on the infected person's skin. If it has, then the priest should judge that person to be impure. The person has become impure because the scab is actually a symptom of an infectious skin disease.

9It may also happen that someone develops an infection because of an infectious skin disease. In this case, the person with the infection should go to the priest. **10**When the priest examines him, the priest should look to see if there is a white swelling on the skin that has caused the hair on the infected spot to become white. If the priest also sees that the skin on the swelling is raw, **11**then this infection on the person's skin is actually a symptom of a chronic, infectious skin disease. The priest should judge the person to be impure. {The impure person should not touch other people or sacred objects or enter into sacred space.} In this case, because the person with the infection is impure, the priest should not merely quarantine the person temporarily.

12Alternatively, {when the priest examines the person with the infection, he might see that} the infectious skin disease has broken out aggressively on the person's skin such that, as far as the priest can see, it now covers the infected person's entire body, from head to toe. **13**If this happens, then the priest should look to see whether the infectious skin disease has really covered the infected person's entire body. If this happens, {and the infected skin has turned white,} the priest should judge the person with the infection to be pure. Because the infection has turned entirely white, the person is pure, {and the infection is not a symptom of an infectious skin disease.} **14**However, whenever a person sees that there is raw skin on their infection, that person has become impure. {The impure person should not touch other people or sacred objects or enter into sacred space.} **15**Whenever the priest sees raw skin on an infection, he should judge the person to be impure. {The person is impure because} there is raw skin on their infection. This demonstrates that the infection is actually a symptom of an infectious disease. **16**But it may happen that the raw skin of the person with the infection changes and once again becomes white. If this happens, he should go to the priest. **17**The priest should examine him. This time, the priest should look to see

if the infection has really become white. If it has, then the priest should judge the person with the infection to be pure. {Because the infection is white,} he is now pure. {The infection is not a symptom of an infectious disease.}

18It may also happen that someone has a boil on their skin, but the boil eventually healed. **19**It may be that, where the boil used to be, there is now a white swelling or a discolored spot on the skin that is reddish in color. If there is, then that person must go and show himself to the priest. **20**The priest should examine the person's skin. The priest should look to see if the discolored or swollen spot of skin seems to be under the skin or if the hair on that spot has become white. These things are symptoms of an infectious skin disease that has broken out where the boil used to be. Therefore, the priest should judge the person to be impure. **21**Alternatively, the priest might examine the person's skin and see that there is no white hair on the discolored or swollen spot of skin. If, instead, the spot is only skin-deep, and it has receded and is now fainter in color, then the priest should quarantine the person with the infection for one week. **22**If, after a week, the swollen or discolored spot of skin has spread aggressively on the skin, then the priest should judge the person to be impure. That spot of skin is actually an infection. **23**But if that discolored spot of skin has stayed where it was and has not spread, then it is merely a scar from the boil. The priest should judge the person to be pure again. {The pure person can touch other people and sacred objects and enter into sacred space once again.}

24It might also happen that a person has a burn from a fire on his skin. The raw skin from the burn may be discolored and reddish-white or pure white in color. **25**If this happens, then the priest should examine the person who has the burn. The priest should look to see if the hair on the discolored spot of skin has become white or if the discolored spot seems to be under the skin. If the priest sees these things, then the discolored spot of skin is a symptom of an infectious skin disease that has broken out on the burn. Because the discolored skin from the burn is an infection and a symptom of an infectious skin disease, the priest should declare the person with the burn to be impure. **26**Alternatively, the priest might examine the person's skin and see that there is no white hair on the discolored spot of skin, that the discolored spot is only skin-deep, and that the spot has receded and is now fainter in color. If the priest sees this, then he should quarantine the person with the burn for one week. **27**On the last day of the week-long quarantine, the priest should examine the person with the burn again. If the discolored spot of skin has spread aggressively on the skin, then the priest should judge the person to be impure. The discolored spot is actually an infection and a symptom of an infectious skin disease. **28**However, the priest might see that the discolored spot of skin has stayed where it was and has not spread on the skin but, instead, it has receded and is now fainter in color. If the priest sees this, then the discolored spot of skin is only swelling from the burn. Because the discolored spot of skin is actually just a scar from the burn, the priest should judge the person with the burn to be pure again.

29It may also happen that a man or a woman has an infection in any place where hair might grow, either on the head or on the lower portion of the face. **30**If this happens, the priest should examine the person with the infection. The priest should look to see if the infection is under the skin or if the hair on the infection has become bright yellow in color and has thinned out. If the priest sees these things, then he should judge the person to be impure. The infection is actually an itchy and contagious skin infection that has come from an infectious skin disease on the head or on the lower portion of the face. **31**However, when the priest examines the person with the infection that appears to be an itchy, contagious skin infection, he might see that the infection does not seem to be under the skin and that there is no normal hair on the infection. If the priest sees these things, then he should quarantine the person with the infection for one week. **32**On the last day of the week-long quarantine, the priest should examine the person with the infection again. The priest should look to see if the spot that looks like it might be an itchy, contagious skin infection has spread. If the hair on the infection is not bright red in color and the spot does not appear to be under the skin, **33**the person with the infection should shave all of his or her hair. However, that person should not shave the hair that is near the spot that looks like it might be an itchy, contagious skin infection. Then the priest should quarantine the person for another week. **34**On the last day of the week-long quarantine, the priest should again examine the person who has the infection that looks like it might be an itchy, contagious skin infection. If the infection has not spread on the skin, and it appears to only be skin-deep, then the priest should judge the person to be pure. The person should wash his clothes, and then he will be pure once again. **35**However, it may happen that the spot that looked like it might have been an itchy, contagious skin infection later aggressively spreads on the person's skin after the priest judged the person to be pure. **36**If this happens, then the

priest should examine him again. The priest should look to see if the spot has spread on the skin. If it has, then the priest need not look for hair that is bright red in color. The person that has the infection that has spread has become impure. **37**However, if, as far as the priest can see, the spot is unchanged and the hair growing on the infected area is healthy, then the infection has healed. {Because it has healed and is not a symptom of an infectious skin disease,} the person is now pure again. So the priest should judge the person to be pure.

38It may also happen that a man or a woman finds very white spots on their skin. **39**The priest should examine that person. Indeed, if the priest sees that the shiny spots on their skin are a faded white in color. then it is a benign rash that has broken out on the skin. {The discolored skin is not a symptom of an infectious skin disease.} The person is still pure.

40It may happen to some men that the hair on the crown of his head starts to thin. If this happens, he is simply balding. He is still pure. **41**The same is true if the hair at the front of his head starts to thin. He is simply developing a receding hairline. He is still pure. **42**However, it may happen that such a man discovers an infection that is reddish-white in color on his balding head, whether his crown is balding or he is developing a receding hairline. If this happens, then the infection is a symptom of an infectious skin disease that has broken out on his balding head, no matter the way in which he is balding. **43**The priest should examine the balding man who has the infection. The priest should look to see if the swollen infection on his balding head—no matter the way in which he is balding—is reddish-white in color, like the way that an infectious skin disease looks on a person's skin. **44**If the man's infection looks like this, then he has an infectious skin disease and he is impure. Because the infection on his head has the appearance that it does, the priest surely must judge the man to be impure.

45Anyone who has an infectious skin disease that develops an infection should tear his clothes and let his long hair hang down disheveled. He should also show his shame by covering his upper lip and crying out, 'I am impure! I have a contagious skin disease! Do not come near me!' **46**As long as he has the infection, he is impure. Because he is impure, he should live alone in a residence outside of the area where everyone else lives.

47Likewise, it might happen that a piece of clothing has on it an infection that is a symptom of an infectious disease. The infection might be on a piece of woolen or linen clothing **48**or on any linen or woolen material that someone is weaving together. Alternatively, the infection might be on a scrap piece of leather or on something that is made of leather. **49**If the infection on any of these fabrics is greenish or reddish in color, then the infection is a symptom of an infectious disease. Whoever owns the infected piece of clothing must show it to a priest. **50**The priest should examine the infected piece of fabric. If it is indeed infected, then he should quarantine it for one week. **51**On the last day of the week-long quarantine, the priest should examine the infected fabric again. Whenever the infected spot spreads, the infection is actually a symptom of an infectious, malignant disease. This is true whether the fabric is part of a piece of clothing, two threads that the person is weaving together, or a scrap piece of leather (no matter what the person is making from the leather). The piece of fabric is now impure. **52**Whoever owns the impure item that has the infection on it should burn the item, no matter what fabric or material it is. Because the infection is a symptom of an infectious malignant disease, he must burn it completely.

53Alternatively, the priest might examine the infected fabric, and he might see that the infected spot has not spread on it—whether it is a piece of clothing, two threads that someone was weaving together, or anything that someone made from leather. **54**If the priest sees that the fabric is indeed infected, then he should tell whoever owns it to wash the thing that has the infection on it and put the entire item in a separate place for another week. **55**The priest should examine the item a week after the owner has washed the infected fabric. Indeed, if the infection remains unchanged in color, even if it has not spread, the fabric is impure and should not be used. Because the infection is actually a rotting fungus, whether on the back or front side of the item, the owner should completely burn the entire item. **56**However, when the priest examines the infected fabric after the owner has washed it, indeed, he may see that the infection has receded and is now fainter in color. If this has happened, the owner should tear the infected portion of fabric out from the item, whether it is an article of clothing or of leather or of weaving. **57**The infection may reappear on the fabric, regardless of what type of item is infected. If this happens, the rotting fungus is spreading. This time, the owner of the infected fabric must completely burn the

entire item. **58**However, if, after the owner washes the item, the infection disappears, the owner should wash it a second time, and then it will be pure.

59This is the way that the people of Israel should handle infections that come from infectious diseases that appear on woolen or linen clothing or on a woven article or on a piece of leather. The people of Israel should use these instructions to determine whether something is pure or impure."

Chapter 14

1Then Yahweh said to Moses, **2**"This is what an Israelite should do to be judged pure when he or she has had an infectious skin disease. The individual should first go to the priest. **3**The priest should meet the person with the infectious skin disease at a location outside the camp and there the priest should examine him. The priest should look to see if the infection is fully healed and no longer contagious. **4**If it is, then the priest should tell the person who desires to be clean to bring two living birds that are acceptable to eat, some cedar wood, crimson thread, and some hyssop branches. **5**Next, the priest should tell the infected person to kill one of the birds while he suspends it over a clay pot that contains fresh water. **6**Then the priest should grab the bird that is still living, along with the cedar, the crimson thread, and the hyssop branches. The priest should dip all of these items, including the living bird, into the water that now also contains blood from the bird that the person killed. **7**The priest should then flick some of the water and blood on the previously infected person whom the priest now intends to cleanse. The priest must flick the blood and water on him seven times. Then the priest should declare that the person is pure {and that he may be with other people again.} Finally, the priest should release the living bird and allow it to fly away toward the open field.

8Then the person whom the priest judged to be pure should go and wash his clothes, shave off all of his hair, and bathe himself thoroughly. When he has done these things, the people of Israel should know that he is pure; he may return to the camp, but he should remain outside his tent for a full week. **9**On the last day of that week-long period, that person should shave off all his hair once again, including his head, beard, and eyebrows. He should wash his clothes once again and thoroughly bathe himself. After he does these things, the people of Israel should consider him to be completely pure. {He may be with other people again.}

10The very next day, that person should acquire two totally healthy male lambs and a totally healthy, year-old female lamb. He should also acquire about seven liters of wheat flour and mix it with olive oil in order to present it as a grain offering. Finally, he should acquire about a half of a liter of olive oil. **11**The priest who judged the person to be pure should make the person whom he is cleansing, along with all of the required items and animals, stand in my presence at the entrance of the sacred tent.

12Then the priest should take one of the male lambs and present it to me to show that he will offer it as a restoring sacrifice. He should also do this with the olive oil. Then priest should lift the lamb and show off the olive oil in my presence in order to demonstrate that he will offer them as a presentation sacrifice. **13**Then that person should kill the lamb in the same location in which people regularly kill the purifying and wholly burned sacrifices. This location should be somewhere that the priests have set apart for such sacred purposes. The person should kill the lamb here because the restoring sacrifice is like the purifying sacrifice in this regard: it belongs to the priest for his portion of food. Out of all the gifts that people offer to me, the portion of the sacrifice that the priests keep for themselves for food is specially set apart. **14**{After catching some of the lamb's blood in a bowl,} the priest should take the blood of the restoring sacrifice and place some of it on the person whom the priest is cleansing—on the lobe of his right ear, the thumb of his right hand, and the big toe of his right foot. **15**Then the priest should take some of the olive oil and pour it into the palm of his own left hand. **16**The priest should then dip his right forefinger into the oil on his left palm and flick that oil seven times with his forefinger toward my presence in the Holy Place where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelites. **17**Whatever oil is left on the priest's palm he should smear on the lobe of the right ear of the person whom the priest is cleansing, the thumb of his right hand, and the big toe of his right foot. The priest should put the oil on top of the blood of the purifying sacrifice that he previously put on the person's extremities. **18**The priest should place whatever oil remains on his palm onto the head of the person

whom he is cleansing. When the priest has done this, he will have cleansed the person in my presence in the sacred tent. {I will restore the person and remove the impurity he acquired from his infectious skin disease.}

19Then the priest should prepare the purifying sacrifice so that he might make a sacrifice that I will accept on behalf of the person whom the priest judged to be clean. If he does this, I will fully cleanse the individual from the impurity that he acquired from his infection. After the priest has offered the purifying sacrifice, the individual whom the priest is cleansing should kill the other lamb so that the priest can begin to prepare the wholly burned sacrifice. **20**The priest should make the wholly burned sacrifice and the grain offering go up to me in heaven by burning them on the altar in a way that causes smoke to go up. If he does this, the priest will have offered a sacrifice that I will accept on behalf of the individual whom the priest is cleansing. I will remove the impurity of his infection from him so that he will be pure once again.

21However, if the person whom the priest is cleansing is poor and cannot afford the two lambs, then he should acquire one lamb for the priest to offer as a restoring sacrifice by lifting it high to me. The individual should offer this lamb so that I might accept him and remove the impurity of his infection from him. In addition to the lamb, the individual should also acquire about two liters of wheat flour that he has mixed with olive oil and can offer as a grain offering. He should also acquire an additional half of a liter of olive oil. **22**He should also acquire two doves or two pigeons—whichever he can afford. He should offer one of these birds as a purifying sacrifice and the other as a wholly burned sacrifice.

23Seven days after the priest judged him to be pure, the individual should bring the animals, the flour, and olive oil to the priest at the entrance of the sacred tent, where he may offer them in my presence. He should bring them all so that I may fully cleanse him from the impurity of his infection. **24**Then the priest should take the lamb that the individual is offering as a restoring sacrifice. He should also take the olive oil. He should raise them up to show me that these are sacrifices that the individual will offer in my presence. **25**Then the individual should kill the lamb that he is offering as a purifying sacrifice {and catch some of its blood in a bowl.} The priest should take some of the lamb's blood and place it on the lobe of the right ear of the person whom the priest is cleansing, the thumb of his right hand, and the big toe of his right foot. **26**Then the priest should take some of the olive oil and pour it into the palm of his own left hand. **27**The priest {should then dip his right forefinger into the oil on his left palm and} flick that oil seven times toward my presence in the Holy Place where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelites. **28**Whatever oil is left on the priest's palm he should put on the lobe of the right ear of the person whom the priest is cleansing, the thumb of his right hand, and the big toe of his right foot. The priest should put the oil on top of the blood of the restoring sacrifice that he previously put on the person's extremities. **29**The priest should pour whatever oil remains on his palm onto the head of the person whom the priest is cleansing. When the priest has done this, I will have cleansed the person in his presence. {I will restore the person and remove the impurity he acquired from his infectious skin disease.} **30**Then the priest should take one of the birds that the person has been able to afford—whichever type, the dove or the pigeon—and prepare it for the sacrifice. **31**{The priest should kill the birds that the person acquired and butcher them in the usual way.} He should offer one as a purifying sacrifice and the other as a wholly burned sacrifice. The priest should do this by placing them on the altar so that he might offer in my presence a sacrifice that I will accept on behalf of the person whom the priest has judged to be clean. I will restore the individual and remove the impurity of his infection from him.

32This is what the person with an infectious skin disease, and who is also poor and cannot afford the usual offerings, should do so that I can cleanse him from the impurity of his infection."

33Then Yahweh said to Aaron and Moses, **34**"I am about to give the people of Israel the land of Canaan, which will belong to them permanently. When the people enter that land, it may happen that I cause an infectious mildew to appear in or on one of the people's family homes. **35**Whenever that happens, the owner of the house should go and inform the priest that there is something in his house that looks like mildew. **36**The priest should tell him to take everything out of the house before the priest comes to examine the mildew. If the owner does not do this, the priest should judge everything and everyone in the house to be impure. However, if the person does what the priest asks, then the priest should enter the house to examine it. **37**The priest should then inspect the house for mildew. Specifically, he should look to see if the mildew has broken out into spots that are greenish or reddish in color on the plaster on the walls. He should also look to see if the mildew appears to be deeper than the surface of

the plaster. **38**If the priest sees these things, then he should immediately leave the house through the front door and quarantine the house for a full week. **39**On the last day of that week-long quarantine, the priest should return to the house and inspect it again. He should look to see if the mildew on the plaster of the walls has spread. **40**If it has, then the priest should tell the owner and residents of the house to tear out every stone in the wall that bears the mildew and cast the infected stones wherever people dispose of impure items outside of the city **41**After the owner has removed all the infected stones, he must scrape all around the inside of the house. The owner must dispose of all the plaster that he scrapes off in the same location where people dispose of impure items outside of the city **42**Then the owner of the house should acquire new stones to replace the ones that bear the mildew. He should also acquire new plaster and replaster the stones in the walls of the house.

43It may happen that the mildew returns and spreads on the walls of the house after the owner of the house has removed the infected stones, scraped the walls clean, and replastered them. **44**If this has happened, then the priest should go to the house and examine it again. He should look to see if the mildew has spread on the plaster of the walls of the house. If it has, then the mildew is actually a malignant mold. The priest should judge the house to be impure {and no one should live in it.} **45**The owner of the house must completely tear it down. He should remove the stones, the timber, and all the plaster. The owner of the house should dispose of everything wherever people dispose of impure items outside of the city.

46Suppose someone goes into that house during the quarantine. Then the priest must declare that this person will be impure until the evening of the day on which he entered the house. **47**Anyone who sleeps in that house or eats in it during that time must wash and clean his clothes.

48Alternatively, whenever the priest comes to examine the house after the owner has replastered it, the priest may determine that the mildew has not spread on the walls. If it has not, then, because the cleaning process has stopped the mold, the priest should judge the house to be pure again. **49**For the priest to purify the house, he will need two birds, some cedar wood, crimson thread, and some hyssop branches. **50**The owner of the house should kill one of the birds while suspending it over a clay pot containing fresh water. **51**Then the priest should take the cedar wood, the hyssop branches, the crimson thread, and the bird which is still alive. He should dip them into the mixture of the blood of the bird, which the owner of the house has just killed, and the fresh water. He should flick some of that blood and water onto the house seven times. **52**By doing this with the blood of the bird, the fresh water, the living bird, the cedar wood, the hyssop branches, and the crimson thread, the priest will be able to purify the house. **53**The priest should release the bird that is still alive and allow it to fly away outside the city toward an open field. By doing this, he will have asked me to accept the house and remove from it the impurity that the house acquired from the infectious mold. When I do this, the house will be pure once again.

54So, those are the instructions for handling any infections that are symptoms of infectious skin diseases, itchy skin irritations, **55**infections in fabric or in a house, **56**and swellings, rashes, or discolored spots on someone's skin. **57**These instructions will teach the priests and the people of Israel how to determine when something or someone is impure and when they are pure. These are the instructions for handling various types of infectious diseases."

Chapter 15

1Then Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron, **2**"Tell the people of Israel that any man might have a discharge coming from his genitals. Whenever this happens, the people of Israel should consider this discharge to be impure. **3**Now, this is how the people of Israel should deal with these types of discharges that have the potential to make people impure. It does not matter whether the man's genitals have secreted the discharge or whether there is a blockage in the man's genitals; the people of Israel should consider this man to be impure.

4The people should consider any bed on which the man who has had a discharge lies to also be impure. Additionally, they should consider any furniture on which the man sits to be impure. **5**Anyone who touches that man's bed should wash and clean his clothes and bathe thoroughly. That person should consider himself to be impure until the evening of the day on which he touched the man's bed. **6**Anyone who sits on any furniture on

which the man who has had a discharge has sat should also wash his clothes and bathe thoroughly. That person should likewise consider himself to be impure until the evening of the day on which he sat on the impure man's furniture.

7In the same way, anyone who touches the man who has had a discharge should wash his clothes and bathe thoroughly. The person should also consider himself to be impure until the evening of the day on which he touched the impure man.

8It may happen that the man who has had a discharge spits on someone who is still pure. If this occurs, the person on whom the impure man spat should wash his clothes and bathe thoroughly. He should consider himself to be impure until the evening of the day on which the impure man spat on him.

9The people of Israel should also consider any clothing or saddle on which the man who has had a discharge rides to be just as impure. **10**Anyone who touches anything that was under him while he rode should also consider himself to be impure until the evening of the day on which he touched the impure man's clothing or saddle on which he rode. Likewise, anyone who picks up or carries whatever was under him while he rode should wash his clothes and bathe thoroughly. He should also consider himself to be impure until the evening of the day on which he lifted or carried the impure man's means of riding. **11**It may happen that the man who has had a discharge touches someone without first washing his hands. If this happens, the person he touched should wash his clothes and bathe thoroughly. That person should also consider himself to be impure until the evening of the day on which the impure man touched him.

12It may happen that the man who has had a discharge touches a clay pot. If this happens, whoever owns the pot should shatter it. However, if the man touches a wooden utensil, whoever owns the utensil must rinse it with water.

13It may happen that a man who has had a discharge recovers and no longer experiences any discharge. If this happens, the man should remain as he is for one full week in order to prepare for the day when I will cleanse him from his impurity. During this time, he should wash his clothes and make sure to bathe and clean his genitals with fresh water. If he does this, he can consider himself to be pure once again. **14**On the last day of that week, he should acquire two doves or two pigeons and come into my presence at the entrance of the sacred tent. There, the man should give the birds he acquired to the priest. **15**The priest should prepare the birds as sacrifices to me. One of the birds should be a purifying sacrifice and the other should be a wholly burned sacrifice. When the priest offers these sacrifices in my presence, I will accept them and restore the man. I will remove from the man the impurity he acquired from his impure discharge.

16It may also happen that a man experiences a seminal emission. When this happens, the man should bathe his whole body, including his genitals, thoroughly. The man should consider himself to be impure until the evening of the day on which he experienced the emission. **17**The man who had the emission should thoroughly wash any clothing or leather that came into contact with the semen. He should consider that piece of clothing or leather to be impure until the evening of the day on which they came into contact with the semen. **18**It may happen that a man has sexual relations with a woman and experiences a seminal emission. When this happens, both the man and the woman should bathe themselves thoroughly. They should consider themselves to be impure until the evening of the day on which they had sexual relations.

19Similarly, it may happen that a woman experiences her menstrual period, such that blood discharges from her genitals. When this happens, she should remain as she is for a full week. During this period, whoever touches the menstruating woman should consider himself to be impure until the evening of the day on which he touched her. **20**The people of Israel should consider any furniture on which the menstruating woman lies or sits to be impure. **21**Anyone who touches a menstruating woman's bed should wash and clean his clothes and bathe thoroughly. That person should consider himself to be impure until the evening of the day on which he touched the menstruating woman's bed. **22**Anyone who touches any furniture on which a menstruating woman has sat should also wash his clothes and bathe thoroughly. That person should likewise consider himself to be impure until the evening of the day on which he touched the menstruating woman's bed or her furniture. **23**It may happen that there was something on the menstruating woman's bed or on a piece of furniture on which the menstruating woman sat.

When someone touches that object, he should consider himself to be unclean until the evening of the day on which he touched that object.

24It may occasionally happen that a man has sexual relations with a menstruating woman such that he comes into contact with her menstrual blood. If this happens, he should consider himself to be impure for a full week. The people of Israel should consider any bed on which that man lies to be impure as well.

25It may also happen that a woman experiences an extended discharge of blood when she is not normally menstruating, or her discharge continues for an inordinate amount of time. If this happens, as long as she experiences a discharge of blood, she should consider herself to be impure, just as when she experiences her normal menstruation. **26**As long as the woman experiences this type of unusual bloody discharge, the people of Israel should consider any bed on which she lies or any furniture on which she sits to be impure, just as is the case when women normally menstruate and become temporarily impure. **27**Anyone who touches the woman's bed or furniture should consider himself to be unclean. He should wash and clean his clothes and bathe thoroughly. That person should consider himself to be impure until the evening of the day on which he touched the woman's bed or furniture.

28It may happen that a woman who has experienced an unusual bloody discharge recovers and no longer experiences any discharge. If this happens, the woman should remain as she is for one full week in order to prepare for the day when I will cleanse her from her impurity. After this time, she should consider herself to be pure once again. **29**On the last day of that week, the woman should acquire two doves or two pigeons and bring them to the priest at the entrance of the sacred tent. **30**The priest should prepare the birds as sacrifices to me. One of the birds should be a purifying sacrifice and the other should be a wholly burned sacrifice. When the priest offers these sacrifices in my presence, I will accept them and restore the woman. I will remove from her the impurity she acquired from her impure bloody discharge.

31The people of Israel must follow these instructions in order to distinguish themselves from that which is impure among them. If they are able to do this, they will not desecrate the sacred place in which I live among them and so I will not kill them. {But if they continue to make themselves impure, I will kill them when they desecrate the sacred place in which I live among them.}

32So, this is what the people of Israel should do when someone experiences a discharge—whenever a man has a seminal emission and so becomes impure, **33**whenever any woman menstruates, whenever anyone, whether a man or a woman, has a bodily discharge, or whenever a man has sexual relations with a woman during her menstrual period."

Chapter 16

1After Aaron's two sons died when they approached Yahweh, Yahweh spoke to Moses. **2**Yahweh said to Moses, "Tell your brother Aaron not to enter into the Most Holy Place inside the curtain where the Sacred Chest and its Lid are located, because I am present in that place in a cloud that hovers over the Lid of the Sacred Chest. If Aaron goes into that room at any time I have not commanded him to go in, he will die.

3But when it is time for Aaron to enter the Most Holy Place in the sacred tent, this is how he should do it. He should acquire a bull from the people's livestock and a ram. He should select the bull to offer as a purifying sacrifice and the ram as a wholly burned sacrifice. **4**Aaron should first wash himself thoroughly and then put on the sacred articles of clothing. He should make sure that the linen undergarments are on his bare skin. Aaron should then put on the sacred linen embroidered tunic, and he should tie the linen waistband around himself. Likewise, he should wrap the linen turban around his head. These are Aaron's sacred articles of clothing that he is to wear. **5**Then Aaron should acquire two male goats and a ram from the flocks of the Israelite community. He should select the goats to offer as purifying sacrifices and the ram as a wholly burned sacrifice.

6Then Aaron should present the bull as a purifying sacrifice for his own sake. When he does this, I will remove
Aaron's sins and the sins of his family from them. **7**Then Aaron should bring the two goats, and he should make
them stand in my presence in the entrance of the sacred tent. **8**Aaron should then roll a pair of small stones on the
ground to determine which goat the priests should sacrifice to Yahweh and which goat the priests should send off
into the wilderness. **9**Then he should offer the goat that the stones designated belonged to me, to Yahweh. He
should prepare it as a purifying sacrifice. **10**As for the goat that the stones determined that the priests should send
off into the wilderness, Aaron should make it stand in my presence alive so that I can use the goat to remove the
people's sins from them by sending the goat off into the desert wilderness.

11Aaron should then present the bull that he selected for himself to be a purifying sacrifice. By presenting it, Aaron
will ensure that I will remove his sins and the sins of his family from them. Once he has presented it to me, Aaron
should kill the bull {and drain off some of its blood in a bowl.} **12**Then he should take a tray and fill it with burning
coals from the altar outside the sacred tent where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelites. He should also grab two
handfuls of sweet-smelling, finely ground incense and bring both the incense and the burning coals inside the
sacred curtain. **13**Then Aaron should place the incense over the burning coals in Yahweh's presence. As it burns, the
incense will produce a smoke cloud that will obscure the Lid that sits on the Sacred Chest. The cloud of incense will
ensure that Aaron will not see my presence in that place so that he will not die. **14**Aaron should also take the bull's
blood and, with his finger, he should flick the blood onto the front of the Lid of the Sacred Chest (on the eastern
side) seven times.

15{Aaron should then leave the sacred tent.} He should kill the goat that he selected to offer as a purifying sacrifice
{and drain off some of its blood into a bowl}. He should offer the goat as a sacrifice on the people's behalf. Aaron
should then bring the goat's blood inside the sacred curtain and do with the goat's blood exactly what he did with
the blood of the bull. He should flick the goat's blood onto the front side of the Lid of the Sacred Chest {seven
times}. **16**By doing this, I will purify the Most Holy Place from anything that the people of Israel have done to cause
it to become impure and defiled. I will also purify it from any wrongdoing that the people of Israel may have done,
even if they have openly defied what I have told my people to do. Regardless, Aaron should do these things so that
Yahweh can purify his sacred tent that is located in the midst of the people of Israel who are often impure and do
wrong. **17**No one else may enter the sacred tent the whole time Aaron is inside the sacred tent doing these things
in the Most Holy Place so that I will remove the people's sins from them. I will remove Aaron's sins, the sins of his
family, and the sins of the entire Israelite community from them.

18Aaron should then go out of the Most Holy Place to the altar that is in the sacred precincts of the sacred tent
where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelites. To purify the altar, he should take some of the blood of both the bull
and the goat and daub it onto the four projected corners on every side of the altar. **19**Aaron should also flick some
of the animal's blood onto the altar seven times with his finger. By doing this, he will cleanse the altar from
anything that the people of Israel have done to make it impure, and he will set it apart for my purposes alone.

20When Aaron has finished purifying the Most Holy Place, the sacred tent, and the altar, he should present the goat
that is still alive. **21**Aaron should place both of his hands on the head of the living goat. He should then say loudly
all the ways the people of Israel have done wrong intentionally, all the ways they have openly defied what I have
told my people to do, and any other ways that they have done wrong. By this, Aaron will place the guilt for these
actions onto the goat's head. Then Aaron should send the goat off into the desert wilderness by handing it off to a
person who is standing by ready to lead the goat away. **22**The goat will carry all of the guilt for the ways the people
of Israel have done wrong into a place in the wilderness that no one will be able to access. He must send it away to
the wilderness!

23Then Aaron should go back into the sacred tent and remove the sacred linen clothing that he was wearing when
he first entered the Most Holy Place. He should leave all those articles of special clothing in the sacred tent.
24Aaron should then bathe himself thoroughly in a place that the priests have set apart for such sacred purposes.
He should then put on his everyday clothes and go out of the sacred tent. Then Aaron should prepare the animals
that he has selected to offer as wholly burned offerings for himself and for the people. When Aaron offers these

animals, I will remove Aaron's sins and the sins of all the people from them. **25**To do this, Aaron should burn the fat portions of the purifying sacrifice on the altar in such a way that it causes smoke to go up.

26The person who leads the goat away into the wilderness where the goat demon Azazel lives should return, wash his clothes, and bathe himself thoroughly. After he has done this, he may enter the camp again. **27**But, because Aaron brought their blood into the Most Holy Place so that I might remove the peoples' sins from them, someone else must remove the remains of the bull that Aaron selected to offer as a purifying sacrifice and of the male goat that he selected to offer as a wholly burned sacrifice and take them outside of the camp. There, he should burn them completely—their skin and all their other meat, including the meat on the animals' heads, their legs below the knee, their other internal organs, and any excrement. **28**The person who burns the remains of the animals should wash his clothes and bathe his body thoroughly. After he has done this, he may enter the camp again.

29This should be a permanent and enduring practice for the people of Israel: on the tenth day of the seventh month of the year, the people of Israel must participate in activities that practice submitting themselves to me. Neither the native-born Israelite nor the immigrant living among them should do any work. **30**This is because, on this day, I will remove the sins of the people from them in order to cleanse them from all the ways that they do wrong and the people will be pure in my presence. **31**The people of Israel should consider this day to be the most important Sabbath day. They must participate in activities that practice submitting themselves to me. The people should always remember to observe this practice. **32**Only the priest whom I appoint and give the responsibilities of the priesthood to succeed his father as the high priest should offer the sacrifices that I will accept so that I will remove the people's sins from them. That priest should make sure to wear the sacred linen clothing when he performs this practice. **33**By doing all these practices, the priest will ensure that I will purify the Most Holy Place, the sacred tent, and the altar. He will also ensure that I will remove from them the sins of the entire priesthood and the entire community of Israel. **34**This should be a permanent and enduring practice for the people of Israel. Doing these things will ensure that I will remove from them all of their wrongdoings every year at this time."

Moses did exactly as Yahweh told him to do.

Chapter 17

1Then Yahweh said to Moses, **2**"Speak to Aaron, his living sons, and all the people of Israel. Tell them that I, Yahweh, am giving them the following instructions: **3**'This is forbidden: No Israelite should ever kill an ox, a lamb, or a goat either inside or outside of the camp where the Israelites live. **4**This is because when they do this, they have not brought their animals into my presence in the sacred tent. They should offer their animals to me, to Yahweh, in the place where I live among the Israelites. But because they kill the animals somewhere else, they have shed innocent blood. I, Yahweh, will demand that blood from them. I will make the person who does this an outcast and remove him from my people. **5**The people of Israel should do this so that they will no longer offer any sacrifices in the open fields. Instead, they must offer those sacrifices to me by bringing them to the priest who is at the entrance to the sacred tent. There they can offer their animals as fellowship offerings to me, to Yahweh. **6**{After the priest kills whatever animal the people of Israel bring,} he should splatter some of its blood against the altar that belongs to me alone, the one that is located at the entrance to the sacred tent. There the priest should burn the animal's fat in a way that causes smoke to go up, and I will enjoy the smell of the smoke. **7**Let me be clear: The people of Israel have been unfaithful to me by sacrificing to goat demons that they consider to be gods. They should never again sacrifice animals to these demons and supposed gods. These instructions are permanent and enduring; the people of Israel and all their descendants should always observe them.

8You should also tell Aaron and his sons that this is also forbidden: no native-born Israelite or immigrant who lives among the Israelites should offer wholly burned offerings or any sacrifices **9**without first bringing his animal into my presence in the sacred tent to offer it to me. I, Yahweh, will make the person who does this an outcast from my people.

10I will oppose any person, whether a native-born Israelite or an immigrant who lives among the Israelites, who consumes any blood. I will make the person who does this an outcast and remove him from my people. **11**For the life of every living thing resides in its blood. I myself have specially provided this blood for my people so that I can remove their sins from them when the blood touches the altar. It is through the blood that I am able to accomplish this, because of the life of the animal that is in its blood. **12**It is for this reason that I have told the people of Israel that nobody, including the immigrant who lives with the people of Israel, may ever consume blood.

13Now it may be that a native-born Israelite or an immigrant who is living with the people of Israel goes hunting and kills wild game or a bird. Provided that whatever they kill is pure and acceptable for eating, whoever killed it should first drain out its blood. Then he should make sure to cover the blood with dirt. **14**The life of every living thing resides in its blood. Its blood is its life! That is why I have told the people of Israel that nobody may consume the blood of any living thing. Let me be clear: the life of every living thing resides in its blood. I will make whoever consumes blood an outcast and remove him from my people.

15Anyone in Israel, including foreigners, who eats any of the meat of any creature that is found dead, or that had been killed by wild animals, must wash his clothes and bathe. Then he {must not touch anyone} until that evening because he is impure until then. **16**But if the person does not wash his clothes or bathe himself, he is now responsible for addressing his wrongdoing.’”

Chapter 18

1Then Yahweh said to Moses, **2**“Make sure to speak to the people of Israel and remind them that I am Yahweh their God. **3**The people of Israel must not behave like the Egyptians, in whose land they used to live. Neither should they behave like the Canaanites, whose land I am giving to them. The people of Israel should not live in a way that emulates any of the practices that these people do. **4**Instead, the people of Israel should obey my laws and be very careful to do everything that I tell them. They should live this way, because I am Yahweh their God. **5**The people of Israel should live in such a way that they make a habit of obeying my laws and doing everything that I tell them. When people do this, they truly live. This is because I am Yahweh.

6So, remember: no Israelite should approach any of his close relatives to have sexual relations with them and so shame them. I am Yahweh!

7No one should have sexual relations with his mother and so shame her. She is his mother! He should absolutely not shame her or his father in this way.

8Likewise, no one should have sexual relations with any of his father’s other wives and so shame them. {Not only would this shame them,} it would also shame his father.

9No one should have sexual relations with his sister and shame her, whether she is his father’s or his mother’s daughter or whether she was born in the same household or somewhere else.

10No one should have sexual relations with his own grandchildren and shame them. In doing so, the person who does this would absolutely shame himself.

11No one should have sexual relations with his half-sister and shame her. She is his sister!

12No one should have sexual relations with his father’s sister and shame her. She is his father’s close relative!

13Neither should anyone have sexual relations with his mother’s sister and shame her. She is his mother’s close relative!

14No one should have sexual relations with his aunt and so shame her and your uncle. No one should approach his aunt to have sexual relations with her. She is his aunt!

15No one should have sexual relations with his daughter-in-law and so shame her. She is his son's wife! He should absolutely not shame her in this way.

16No one should have sexual relations with his sister-in-law and so shame her. The person who does this would shame both her and his brother.

17No one should have sexual relations with both a woman and her daughter. This also means that no one should attempt to marry a woman and her granddaughter so that he can have sexual relations with her. They are her close relatives! These kinds of behaviors are utterly depraved—they transgress the way Yahweh intended for family members to relate to one another and only brings shame to everyone involved.

18No one should attempt to marry his wife's sister so that he can have sexual relations with her while his wife is still living. To do so would only make his sister-in-law a concubine and rival wife.

19No one should approach a woman who is menstruating and so is impure in order to have sexual relations with her.

20No man should have sexual relations and have a seminal emission with a fellow Israelite's wife. If he does this, he will become impure.

21No one should sacrifice their children to the god Molech by burning them alive. Doing so would profane and dishonor my reputation as your God. Remember: I am Yahweh!

22No man should have sexual relations with another man as he would have with a woman. This behavior is utterly abominable; it transgresses the way Yahweh intended for people to behave and only brings shame to everyone involved.

23Likewise, no one should have sexual relations with any animal. This means that no woman should give herself to an animal to copulate with it. Doing so would make the person who does this impure. This behavior is utterly perverse—it transgresses the way Yahweh intended for people to behave and only brings shame to everyone involved.

24The people of Israel must not make themselves impure by doing any of these things, because by doing these things, the people who currently live in the land of Canaan have made themselves impure. I am removing them from the land so that you can live there. **25**In fact, the people who currently live in the land of Canaan have even made the land itself impure. Because of this, I have brought against the land the punishment for the guilt that the land has acquired because of their wrongdoing. I am removing the people who did these things in the land as if the ground itself is throwing them up and rejecting them. **26**But my people, both the native-born Israelite and the immigrant who is living with the people of Israel, must all be careful to do everything that I have told them, including my laws and my customs. They should never do all of these abominable behaviors that the people who live in the land practice, **27**because the people who currently live in the land of Canaan have done all of these abominable behaviors. As a consequence, they have made the land itself impure. **28**Just as I am removing the people who currently live in the land as if the land itself is throwing them up and rejecting them, if the people of Israel do the same thing, I will also remove them in the same manner.

29I will remove the people of Israel because I will make any person who does any of these abominable practices an outcast. I, Yahweh, will remove him from my people. **30**So, the people of Israel should be very careful to do everything that I have told them. If they are careful, they will not do the abominable practices that the people who currently live in the land do. The people of Israel will avoid making themselves impure. Remember: I am Yahweh your God!"

Chapter 19

1Then Yahweh said to Moses, **2**"Make sure to tell the entire people of Israel that they must be set apart, because I, Yahweh their God, am set apart from wrongdoing and impurity of the world. {I want my people to be like me.}

3Everyone should show respect to their parents. Likewise, everyone should practice the Sabbath days and honor them. Remember: I am Yahweh your God!

4No one should ever abandon me to worship worthless idols. Neither should anyone fashion for themselves idol statues out of cast metal. Remember: I alone am Yahweh your God!

5Whenever someone wants to sacrifice a fellowship sacrifice to me, to Yahweh, he should offer it in a way that I will accept. **6**The people of Israel may eat the meat that comes from such a fellowship sacrifice on the day that he offers the sacrifice and on the following day. However, on the third day after he offered the sacrifice, the person who offered the fellowship sacrifice should completely burn the remaining meat. **7**If anyone ever eats the meat from a fellowship sacrifice on the third day after an individual offered it, I will no longer accept whatever sacrifice the individual offered. The meat is now considered desecrated. **8**The people of Israel must hold responsible for addressing his wrongdoing whoever eats that meat because he has defiled what is set apart for my purposes alone. I, Yahweh, will make the person who does this an outcast. The people of Israel should no longer consider that person to be one of my people.

9Whenever the people of Israel gather in the harvest of their fields during harvest time, they should leave the corners of the fields unharvested. They should also refrain from picking up anything that they drop while harvesting. **10**Likewise, when the people of Israel harvest the grapes from their vineyards, they should not pick every single grape, nor should they go back a second time to pick up the grapes that they have accidentally dropped. They should leave the unharvested corners of their fields and the dropped grapes to provide food for the poor and the immigrants. Remember, they should do this because I am Yahweh their God!

11Here is how the people of Israel should treat one another: No one should steal, deceive, or lie to his fellow Israelite. **12**No one should call on me to be a false witness in order to acquit himself from the guilt of his wrongdoing. Doing so would dishonor me and associate the God of Israel with the impurity that comes from wrongdoing. Remember: I am Yahweh!

13No one should extort the people close to him or steal anything from them. Neither should anyone withhold any wages from hired workers until the next day. **14**No one should ever pronounce a curse against someone who is deaf or intentionally do something that would cause someone who is blind to trip and fall. Instead, the people of Israel must fearfully recognize the power and authority of their God and act accordingly. Remember: I am Yahweh!

15No one should ever unjustly judge someone. This means that no judge should give special treatment to someone who is poor and seemingly insignificant; neither should they favor someone who is wealthy and seemingly important. Rather, judges should always execute judgment fairly and ethically for the people of Israel.

16No one should go about spreading false rumors about people. Neither should anyone act in such a way as to oppose the life of someone who is close to him {by giving false testimony in court that might lead to someone's execution}. Remember: I am Yahweh!

17No one should continue hating someone who is close to him. Clearly admonish your fellow Israelite when he sins so that you will not become guilty as well.

18No one should try to get revenge against another person or be inordinately angry with one of his own people. Instead, the people of Israel should act lovingly to those who are closest to them. They should treat one another as they treat themselves. Remember: I am Yahweh!

19The Israelites should be very careful to do what I have told them. They should not breed two kinds of animals
that they own, nor should they sow two kinds of seeds in the same field. Likewise, they should not wear clothing
that they have made from mixed fabrics.

20Now, it may happen that a man has sexual relations with a woman and experiences a seminal emission. However,
it may be that this woman was a female slave whose master had given her to be another man's wife, but the
woman's master had not first paid for her bride price (which would secure her freedom) or outright freed her. If
this is the case, then the woman's owner should pay a sum of money for the wrong he has done. The people of God
must execute neither person who has sexual relations because she was not a free woman (and, therefore, her
master had not properly given her to the man whom she was to marry) when the man had sexual relations with
her. **21**However, the man who had sexual relations with the slave woman should bring the required penalty for his
guilt to me, to Yahweh, at the entrance of the sacred tent. Specifically, he should offer a goat as a restoring
sacrifice. **22**When this happens, the priest will offer the goat as a restoring sacrifice in my presence, so that I,
Yahweh, will remove the guilt that the man acquired because of the wrongdoing that he has done. Then I, Yahweh,
will forgive the man of the wrongdoing he has done.

23When the people of Israel enter the land that I have promised to give to them, they should plant various kinds of
trees that produce fruit. However, for three years, the people of Israel should consider the fruit of these trees to be
forbidden, as if they were a person's uncircumcised foreskin. During this time, no one should eat this fruit. **24**The
next year, all the fruit of the trees the people of Israel have planted should be considered set apart for me. The
people of Israel should offer them as special offerings of praise to me, to Yahweh. **25**But in the fifth year, the people
of Israel may eat the fruit of the trees that they have planted, so that their yield of fruit increases every year.
Remember: I am Yahweh your God!

26No one should eat any meat that still has the animal's blood in it. Also, no one should use magic to try to know or
control the future.

27{The people of Israel should not mourn for their dead as the people of the surrounding nations do.} They should
not shave the hairs of their heads, nor should they trim the corners of their beads.

28The people of Israel should not cut their bodies when they mourn for people who have died. Likewise, they
should not tattoo themselves. Remember: I am Yahweh!

29The people of Israel should never disgrace the value of their daughters by forcing them to become prostitutes. If
they do so, soon prostitutes will be so numerous that it will be as if the land itself is a prostitute. The land will be
filled with all other kinds of depraved behavior.

30Honor my sacred festivals by celebrating them. Honor the place where you worship me. Remember: I am
Yahweh.

31No one should ever abandon me by inquiring of someone who speaks to the dead, nor should anyone seek the
advice of someone who inquires of dead family members. Doing so will only make the people of Israel impure.
Remember: I am Yahweh your God!

32The people of Israel should respect elderly people by standing up when they enter the room. They should also
honor the elderly. The people of Israel must fearfully recognize the power and authority of their God and act
accordingly. Remember, I am Yahweh!

33When immigrants live among the people of Israel in their land, the people of Israel must not mistreat them.
34The people of Israel must treat immigrants who live with them like they treat the native-born person. Indeed, the
people of Israel should act lovingly toward them, just as if they were their own bodies. This is because the people of
Israel were once immigrants in Egypt. Remember, I am Yahweh your God!

35No one should ever unjustly judge someone with regards to how long something is, how much it weighs, or its
volume. **36**This is because the people of Israel should always be using honest measuring sticks, weights on the

scales, and measuring baskets. Remember: I am Yahweh your God, who is bringing the people of Israel out of Egypt.

37The people of Israel should always be careful to do everything that I have told them to do and should obey my customs. Remember, I am Yahweh!”

Chapter 20

1Then Yahweh said to Moses, **2**“Be sure to tell the people of Israel that any Israelite or any foreigner who is living in Israel who sacrifices any of his children to the false god Molech should certainly die. The people living in Israel should kill such a person by throwing stones at him. **3**I will personally punish such a person. I will make the person who does this an outcast and remove him from my people. I will do this because he has given his child to the false god Molech and so defiled my holy space and tainted my reputation. **4**But it may happen that the people who live in Israel ignore that person when he sacrifices one of his children to the false idol Molech, and they do not execute that person. **5**If that happens, I will personally punish that person and his family unit. I will remove that person from my people—him and anyone else who acts unfaithfully in the same manner by worshiping the false idol Molech.

6I will punish those who abandon me by inquiring of someone who speaks to the dead or someone who inquires of dead family members. In doing these things, the people of Israel act unfaithfully. I will make the person who does this an outcast and remove him from my people.

7The people of Israel must be careful to keep themselves set apart for me and to be holy people. They should do this because I am Yahweh their God. **8**The Israelites should habitually obey my laws and live by them. Remember: I am Yahweh, the one who sets you apart from the other people.

9The people of Israel must execute anyone who curses his father or his mother. He has caused his own death by cursing his father and mother.

10It may happen that a man commits adultery with another man’s wife. If this happens, the people of Israel must execute both the man and the woman.

11A man who has sexual relations with one of his father’s wives has shamed his father. The people of Israel must execute both that man and woman. They will be responsible for their own deaths.

12The people of Israel must execute a man who has sexual relations with his daughter-in-law. They must execute both that man and the woman. They have done something that is utterly perverse. They will be responsible for their own deaths.

13If a man has sexual relations with another man, as he would with a woman, they both have done something that is utterly abominable. The people of Israel must execute both men. They will be responsible for their own deaths.

14A man who marries both a woman and her mother has done something utterly depraved. The people of Israel must burn all three of them to death so that no one among the people of Israel will continue to commit such a depraved action.

15The people of Israel must execute a man who has sexual relations with an animal. They must also kill the animal.

16Likewise, the people of Israel must kill a woman who gives herself to an animal to copulate with it. They must execute both her and that animal. They will be responsible for their own deaths.

17If a man sleeps with his sister, whether she is his father’s or his mother’s daughter, and they see one another naked, they have done something disgraceful. Because the man has shamed his sister, I will remove them from among my people so that the people of Israel no longer see them. The people of Israel should hold him responsible for his wrongdoing.

18If a man sleeps with a woman during her menstrual period, they have both revealed her flowing blood and brought shame on the woman. I will make both of them outcasts and remove them from my people.

19No man should have sexual relations with his aunt and shame her, whether she is his mother's or his father's sister. In so doing, he would disgrace a close relative. The people of Israel should hold both of them responsible for their wrongdoing.

20A man who has sexual relations with his uncle's wife has shamed his uncle. I will punish both of them by causing them to die without having any children.

21If a man has sex with his brother's wife {while his brother is still living}, that is disgraceful. He has dishonored his brother; and they both will die without having any children.

22The people of Israel should habitually obey all my laws and customs and do everything that I tell them. If they do this, I will not reject and remove them from the land to which I am bringing them to live. **23**Likewise, the people of Israel must not practice the laws and customs of the people who currently live in the land. I am removing them from the places in which they live because they have done all of these practices. For this reason, I abhor them. **24**But I told the people of Israel, 'You will take their land from them as if you were inheriting it from your father. I will give it to you personally to be your family's possession. The soil in that land is very fertile and produces good crops abundantly. Remember: I am Yahweh your God, who has set you apart from the other people who live around you.'

25So the people of Israel should learn to distinguish which animals and birds are acceptable to me and pure from those that are unacceptable to me and impure. By doing so, they will not defile themselves by eating unacceptable animals, birds, or other creatures that crawl along on the ground. These animals I have set apart as those which make the people of Israel impure and unable to enter into holy space. **26**In this way, the people of Israel must belong to me, Yahweh, as a people who are set apart and noticeably different from the people who live around them. This is because I am Yahweh, and I am also set apart from every created thing. In the same way, I have set the people of Israel apart from the people of other nations. They belong to me uniquely.

27But the people of Israel must execute anyone among them who speaks to the dead or inquires of dead family members. The people of Israel must kill them by throwing stones at them. Such people are responsible for their own deaths."

Chapter 21

1Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and tell them that, as long as they live among the people of Israel, they must not make themselves impure by touching a dead body. **2**However, they may touch the dead bodies of their close relatives, such as their mother, father, son, daughter, or brother. **3**They may also touch the dead body of a sister if she is an unmarried virgin and has been living in their house, because she has no husband to bury her. For the sake of burying such a sister, the priests may become impure. **4**However, as long as they live among the people of Israel, the priests must not cause themselves to become impure by touching the dead bodies of his in-laws. Doing so would dishonor the priesthood and associate the God of Israel with impurity.

5The priests of Israel must not participate in the mourning rituals of the nations who live around Israel. This means that they must not shave their heads or trim the edges of their beards or slash their bodies in grief. **6**The priests of Israel must be people who are set apart to me, their God. They must not disgrace and tarnish my reputation, because they are the ones who present the gifts of food that the people of Israel will offer to Yahweh. For this reason, the priests of Israel must be set apart in their behavior.

7The priests of Israel must not marry a prostitute who has defiled herself or a woman who has divorced her husband, because the priests are set apart for God. **8**You, Moses, should make sure that the priests of Israel are set

apart to worship and serve me because they are the ones who present the food offerings to me, their God. You, Moses, should think of the priests as belonging to me, because I, Yahweh, am the one who set the priests apart to serve and worship me. I, Yahweh, am set apart from the impurity of the world.

9If a daughter of a priest disgracefully becomes a prostitute she also disgraces her father. The Israelites must burn her to death.

10The high priest is the one among his relatives whom I have appointed for his work by pouring on his head the sacred olive oil that the priests use to dedicate people and objects wholly to Yahweh. The high priest is also the one whom God has given the responsibility of wearing the special clothes. He must not allow his hair to be uncombed, nor should he tear his clothes when he is mourning for a dead relative. **11**The high priest of Israel must not enter any place where there is a dead body. To do so would cause him to become impure and unable to perform his work. He should not touch a dead body, even if his father or his mother has died. **12**When one of his close relatives dies, the high priest must not leave the sacred tent to join those who are mourning because the sacred olive oil that you, Moses, have poured on his head has set him apart to serve and worship me. Leaving and mourning would cause him to become impure and unfit for his work and would also defile my sacred tent. Remember: I am Yahweh your God!

13Remember, the priests of Israel should only marry women who have never had sexual relations. **14**The priests of Israel should not marry widows or divorced women or defiled prostitutes. Rather, they must only marry young, unmarried Israelite women. **15**If they do, their children will remain pure and able to be priests among the people of Israel. Remember: I am Yahweh, and I set the priests apart to serve and worship me."

16Then Yahweh said to Moses, **17**"Tell Aaron that no one of his descendants who suffers from a deformity or disability should ever present the food gifts that people offer to me, their God. **18**In fact, no one who suffers from a deformity or disability may approach my holy space and offer a sacrifice. This includes anyone who is blind, lame, whose face is disfigured, whose legs are of unequal lengths, **19**anyone who suffers from a disability in their feet or hands, **20**anyone who has a misshapen back, anyone who is abnormally short, has defective sight, has a skin disease of any kind, or whose genitals have been damaged. **21**No descendant of Aaron, the first high priest, who suffers from any disability or deformity should ever approach my altar to present the food gifts that the people of Israel offer to me, Yahweh. This is because he suffers from a disability or deformity. He must never present the food gifts that the people of Israel offer to me, their God. **22**However, priests who suffer from disabilities or deformities may still eat any of the sacred food that I have set apart for the priests to eat. **23**Despite this, because of their disabilities or deformities, such priests must not pass through the special curtain in the sacred tent or approach my altar. If they did that, they would cause my sacred tent to become impure and unfit for my presence. Remember: I am Yahweh, and I set these places apart for myself."

24So Moses spoke to Aaron, his sons, and all the Israelites.

Chapter 22

1Then Yahweh said to Moses, **2**"Instruct Aaron and his sons to carefully honor the holy sacrifices that the Israelites bring to me. The priests represent my holy reputation, they must not dishonor it. {Remember:} I am Yahweh!

3Tell them that, while he is impure, no priest should ever approach my sacred altar to present a sacrifice that the people of Israel have set aside to belong to me, Yahweh. This applies to every descendant of Aaron who serves as a priest for as long as there are priests in Israel. If this ever happens, I will make the priest who does this an outcast and remove him from my presence. Remember: I am Yahweh!

4Until the priests declare him to be pure once again, no descendant of Aaron who suffers from an infectious skin disease or a flowing discharge may eat the special food that I have set aside from the food gifts that the people of Israel offer to me for the priests to eat. This rule also applies to any priest who touches a dead body, which is impure, or who experiences an abnormal genital discharge, **5**or who touches any creature that swarms and crawls

along the ground and becomes unclean or who touches a person who is currently impure—no matter the reason for which that person is impure. **6**Remember: any priest who touches anything or anyone impure should consider himself to be impure until the evening of that day. The priest must not eat any of the special food that I have set aside from my food gifts for the priests to eat unless the priest first bathes himself. **7**After the sun sets, the priest should consider himself to be pure once again. He may eat the special food that I have set apart from my food gifts for the priests to eat, because I have made provision for the priests by giving them this food. **8**But no priest should eat the meat from an animal's corpse or from an animal that wild animals killed and someone later found dead. If a priest does this, he makes himself impure and unfit to serve or worship me. Remember: I am Yahweh.

9The priests must carefully avoid exactly what I, Yahweh, have told them to avoid. If they do not, they will have shown me disrespect and defiled the sacred food gifts that the people of Israel have offered to me. I will hold them responsible for their wrongdoing and kill them. Remember: I am Yahweh, and I have set the priests apart to serve and worship me.

10No one outside of the priest's immediate family may eat the sacred food that I have set apart for the priests to eat. This includes any passing guest that a priest hosts in his home or any hired laborer. **11**However, a slave that a priest has bought with his own money may eat this special food. Likewise, any slave that is born into a priest's household is welcome to eat the sacred food that I, Yahweh, have set apart for the priests to eat. **12**However, when a priest's daughter marries a man who is not a priest, she may no longer eat the sacred foods that the people of Israel have presented to Yahweh as a special contribution of food for the priests to eat. **13**It may happen that a priest's daughter becomes a widow or divorces from her husband and yet has no children. If this happens, and the woman returns to her father's household to live there as she did when she was young, she may eat the special food that I have set apart for the priests to eat. However, no one outside of the priest's immediate family may ever eat this sacred food.

14It may happen that a person who is not a priest mistakenly eats the special food that I, Yahweh, have set aside for the priests to eat. If this happens, the person who ate the food must repay the full value of the food that he ate, plus an additional one-fifth of its value, and give the money to the priest to whom the food belonged. **15**By practicing these rules, the priests will not disrespect and profane the sacred food that the people of Israel have offered as their sacrifice to me, Yahweh. **16**However, if the priests fail to do this, and they eat the special food when they are impure or anyone outside of the priest's immediate family eats the special food, I will hold both the priests and the people of Israel responsible for the guilt of their wrongdoing. I will do this because I am Yahweh, and I have set the priests apart to serve and worship me."

17Then Yahweh said to Moses, **18**"Tell Aaron, his sons, and all the people of Israel that any Israelite or non-Israelite living among the people of Israel may present wholly burned sacrifices to me, Yahweh. They may present sacrifices because of a vow that they make to me, or freely and unprompted. **19**However, for me to accept such sacrifices, whoever offers a sacrifice that the priest completely burns on the altar must present a totally healthy male animal, whether a bovine, sheep, or goat. **20**This means that no one should ever offer to me an animal that suffers from disabilities or defects. I will not accept these animals for the people of Israel. **21**Any animal that someone presents to me, Yahweh, as a fellowship sacrifice must be totally healthy for me to accept the sacrifice. Whether a person presents it to fulfill an extraordinary vow that he made to me or whether the person offers the sacrifice freely and unprompted, whether bovine or flock animals: no animal presented as a sacrifice to me, Yahweh, must suffer from a disability or deformity. **22**This includes animals that are blind, have broken bones, are maimed, or any animals that suffer from running sores or any visible infectious skin disease. The people of Israel must never present any animal in this condition to me, Yahweh, as a sacrifice. The priests must not burn even a piece of such an animal on my altar. **23**However, the people of Israel may present to me an ox or a sheep that has misshapen or stunted limbs, if they intend the sacrifice to be a voluntary offering. Nevertheless, I will not accept such animals for a sacrifice that someone intends to fulfill a promise that he made to me. **24**Particularly, the people of Israel should never offer to me a bovine or flock animal whose owner has crushed, pulverized, torn off, or removed its testicles. As long as they live in the land of Canaan, the people of Israel must not present such animals as sacrifices to me. **25**The people of Israel must not offer such animals as food gifts to me, their God, even if they have purchased the animal from a

non-Israelite, because these animals suffer from disabilities and deformities. I consider such animals as unacceptable sacrifices from you."

26Then Yahweh said to Moses, **27**"A newborn calf or lamb or goat must remain with its mother for a week after its mother has given birth to it. After that week has passed, I, Yahweh, will accept the young animal as a sacrifice and food gift to me. **28**However, make sure that the people of Israel do not slaughter a fully grown bovine or flock animal and its young on the same day.

29The people of Israel may sacrifice an animal to thank me for what I have done for them. When they do this, they should present it in such a way that I will accept the sacrifice for the one presenting it. **30**This means that the people who will eat the meat of such a sacrifice must do so on the same day that the individual offers the sacrifice. He should make sure that he does not leave any of the meat of the sacrifice until the next morning. {Remember:} I am Yahweh!

31The people of Israel must make a habit of doing everything that I have commanded them to do. Remember: I am Yahweh! **32**This means that the people of Israel should not profane and dishonor my reputation as their God by disobeying what I have told them to do. Instead, the people of Israel should behave in a way that demonstrates that I am set apart from impurity and wrongdoing and that I, Yahweh, live in their midst. Remember: I am Yahweh, and I have set my people apart to serve and worship me! **33**I am the one who rescued the people of Israel from their slavery in Egypt so that I could be their God. Remember: I am Yahweh!"

Chapter 23

1Yahweh spoke to Moses, **2**"Tell the Israelite people: I have appointed these sacred festivals. You must announce when the people should gather together to worship me. **3**You may work for six days, but the seventh day is a special day of complete rest. You must gather together to worship me. You must not do any work on that day. This is a Sabbath to honor Yahweh wherever you live.

4These are the special times that I have chosen, the holy gatherings that you must announce at their proper times. **5**In the first month, on the fourteenth day at twilight, {you must celebrate} the Passover to {honor} Yahweh. **6**On the fifteenth day of this same month is the Festival of Unleavened Bread to {honor} Yahweh. For seven days you must eat bread {that you made} without yeast. **7**On the first day you must gather together for a holy meeting. You must not do any regular work. **8**For seven days you must bring offerings to Yahweh. On the seventh day you must gather again for a holy meeting. You must not do any regular work."

9Yahweh spoke to Moses, **10**"Tell the Israelite people: When you enter the land that I am giving you and harvest your crops, you must bring a bundle of the first grain you harvest to the priest. **11**The priest will lift up the bundle {to present it} to Yahweh so that Yahweh will accept your gift. The priest must do this on the day after the Sabbath. **12**On the day you present the bundle of grain, you must also sacrifice a one-year-old male lamb that has no defects as a burnt offering to Yahweh.

13With it {you must also bring} a grain offering of four liters of fine flour mixed with olive oil as an offering to Yahweh. It will make an aroma he enjoys. {You must also bring} one liter of wine as a drink offering. **14**On that day, you must not eat any bread, roasted grain, or fresh grain until you have brought this offering to your God. This is a rule that will continue forever for all your descendants, wherever you live.

15Count seven full weeks from the day after the Sabbath when you brought the bundle of grain as an offering. **16**Count fifty days until the day after the seventh Sabbath. Then bring a new grain offering to Yahweh. **17**At home, {each family must} bake two loaves of bread using yeast and four liters of fine flour. {Take them to the priest} and he will lift them up high to dedicate them to Yahweh. This will be the first offering to Yahweh from your harvest.

18Along with the bread, present seven one-year-old male lambs with no defects, one young bull, and two rams. Burn them completely {on the altar} to Yahweh. They and the grain offering and drink offerings are a present for

Yahweh and will make a pleasing aroma for Yahweh. **19**You must also offer one male goat as a purifying sacrifice
and two one-year-old male lambs as a fellowship sacrifice. **20**The priest will lift up these two lamb offerings {high to
dedicate them} to Yahweh. He will also offer the loaves of bread that were baked from the first wheat that you
harvest. Those offerings are sacred to Yahweh, but they are for the priests {to eat}.

21On that same day announce that the people must gather together for a holy meeting. You must not do any
regular work. This is a rule that will continue forever for all your descendants, wherever you live.

22When you harvest your crops, do not harvest all the way to the edges of your fields. Do not pick up the grain that
falls on the ground. Leave it for poor people and foreigners. Remember: I am Yahweh your God."

23Yahweh spoke to Moses, **24**"Tell the Israelite people: On the first day of the seventh month, you must have a
special day of rest. You must gather together for a holy meeting {when you hear} the trumpet blast. **25**You must
not do any regular work {on that day}. Instead you must bring a present to Yahweh."

26Yahweh spoke to Moses, **27**"On the tenth day of this seventh month you must gather together for a holy meeting.
Show that you are sorry for sinning {by not eating}. Bring a food present to Yahweh. This will be a special day for
asking Yahweh to forgive you for the sins that you have committed. **28**Because on that day {the priests} will offer
sacrifices to Yahweh your God to ask him to forgive your sins, you must not do any work all day. **29**You must expel
from your group and from the Israelite nation anyone who does not show that he is sorry for sinning {by not
eating} on that day. **30**I will kill anyone who does any work on that day, right in the middle of his family! **31**You must
not work at all! You and all your descendants must always obey these commands, wherever you live. **32**That day
you must all rest completely. Also, you must {not eat} to show that you are sorry for having sinned. Rest from the
evening of the ninth day of the month until the evening of the tenth day of the month."

33Yahweh spoke to Moses, **34**"Tell the Israelite people: On the fifteenth day of this seventh month is the Festival of
Shelters. This festival to honor Yahweh will last for seven days. **35**On the first day you must gather together for a
holy meeting. You must not do any regular work. **36**On each of the seven days of this festival, you must bring food
presents to Yahweh. On the eighth day you must gather together again for a holy meeting and bring another food
present to Yahweh. This is a special gathering. You must not do any regular work.

37(To summarize, these are the festivals that Yahweh has appointed. You must announce that these are holy
meetings in order to give presents to Yahweh. You will bring these: animal presents that you will burn completely,
presents you make from flour, presents {to promise friendship with Yahweh}, and presents of wine. Bring each
present on the day that Yahweh commanded. **38**You must celebrate these festivals in addition to worshiping
Yahweh on the Sabbath days. You must give Yahweh all those offerings in addition to his regular presents, the
presents that people give when they solemnly promise to do something, and any presents that people give to
Yahweh voluntarily.)

39On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after you have harvested your crops, be sure to celebrate the Festival
of Shelters to honor Yahweh for seven days. Rest completely on the first day and on the eighth day. **40**On the first
day, take the best fruit from your trees, palm branches, leafy branches, and willow branches from the riverbank.
Celebrate with joy before Yahweh your God for seven days. **41**Celebrate this festival to honor Yahweh for seven
days each year. You must celebrate it in the seventh month. You and all your descendants must always obey these
commands. **42**During the seven days of that festival, all of you people who have been Israelites all of your lives
must live in shelters. **43**That will remind your descendants that I made their ancestors live in shelters after I rescued
them from Egypt. Do not forget that I, Yahweh your God, {am the one who is commanding this}."

44So Moses told the Israelites about all these special times that Yahweh had chosen.

Chapter 24

1Yahweh also said to Moses, **2**"Command the Israelite people to constantly bring you clear oil made from pressed olives. This is to burn in the lamps {in the sacred tent} in order that those lamps will be lit all the time. **3**Aaron must take care of the lamps in Yahweh's presence continually, so that they will burn all night long. You must obey this rule forever. Outside the curtain of the very holy place which is in the sacred tent **4**on the lampstand that is dedicated to Yahweh, he must constantly take care of the lamps that burn in Yahweh's presence.

5Also, each week you must take some fine flour and bake twelve loaves of bread, using four and one-half liters of flour for each loaf. **6**Put the loaves in two rows, with six loaves in each row, on the table covered with pure gold in Yahweh's presence. **7**Along each row, place on {the gold table} some pure incense. It will represent the bread, and {the priest will burn} it as a present for Yahweh instead of the bread. **8**The priests must put new loaves of bread on the table each Sabbath day. You Israelites continually offering this gift to me, Yahweh, represents the never-ending covenant between us. **9**When they remove the loaves from the table, they will belong to Aaron and his descendants. They must eat them in a sacred place set aside for this purpose, because they are a very sacred part of the presents to Yahweh. This food will always be for the priestly family."

10-11 There was a man who had an Israelite mother and an Egyptian father. His mother's name was Shelomith. Her father was Dibri from the tribe of Dan. One day the half-Israelite man was walking in the Israelite camp, and he and an Israelite man started fighting there in the camp. While they were fighting, the half-Israelite man said bad things about Yahweh and cursed Yahweh. Then some people took the half-Israelite man to Moses. **12**Moses had some people guard him until they could find out from Yahweh what they should do to him.

13Then Yahweh said to Moses, **14**"Take the man who cursed me outside the camp. There all those who heard what he said must put their hands on his head {to indicate that he is guilty}. Then all the people must kill him by throwing stones at him. **15**Tell the Israelites, 'If anyone curses God, you must punish him for sinning. **16**So you must surely execute anyone who curses Yahweh. All the people must throw stones at him until he is dead. It does not matter if he is a foreigner or an Israelite from birth. You must surely execute anyone who curses Yahweh.

17Also, if anyone murders another person, the people must surely execute him. **18**And anyone who kills another person's animal must give that person a live animal to replace the one that he killed. **19**If one Israelite injures another Israelite, injure the person who caused the injury in the same way as the injury he caused. **20**If someone breaks one of another person's bones, break the same bone of the person who caused the injury. If someone injures another person's eye, injure his eye. If someone knocks out another person's tooth, knock out one of his teeth. Do to the offender the same as what he did to the other person. **21**Whoever kills another person's animal must give that person a live animal to replace the one that he killed, but the people must execute anyone who murders another person. **22**You Israelites and foreigners who live among you must all have that same law. Remember: I am Yahweh your God.'"

23Then Moses told the Israelites everything Yahweh had said. So they took the man who had cursed Yahweh outside the camp and killed him by throwing stones at him. The Israelites did exactly what Yahweh commanded them to do through Moses.

Chapter 25

1Yahweh said to Moses on Mount Sinai, **2**"Tell the Israelites this: When you enter the land that I am about to give you, you must {regularly} let the ground rest for a Sabbath to {honor me,} Yahweh. **3**For six years plant crops in your fields, prune your grapevines, and harvest your crops. **4**But during the seventh year you must allow your fields to rest completely as a Sabbath {to honor me,} Yahweh. Do not plant seeds in your fields or prune your grapevines during the seventh year. **5**Do not organize harvesting grain or gathering grapes that grow on their own without your planting or pruning. You must allow the land to rest for that one year. **6**But even while it is resting, the land will provide you with food. You, your male and female servants, workers whom you have hired, and people who are

living among you temporarily—you all may eat those things. **7**Your livestock and other animals on your land are also permitted to eat whatever the land produces during that year.

8Count how many rest years you have had. After seven rest years, that is after seven times seven years (which is 49 years), **9**blow trumpets everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month of the next year. These trumpets will announce the Day of Atonement throughout the land. **10**Make this 50th year a special celebration and announce that everyone in the country is free. This is the year for restoring! {(When you come into the land, Yahweh will give each family some land that is to be theirs permanently.)} You must give back any of that land {that they have had to sell because of debts}. You must also free and send any Israelites who had to become slaves {because of debts} back to their families. **11**The fiftieth year will be a year for restoring. During that year do not plant anything, and do not harvest in your usual manner the crops or grapes that have grown by themselves. **12**Because it is a time of restoring, you will treat it as sacred and eat only what you take directly from the fields.

13In that year of restoring, everyone should return to his own inherited property.

14If you sell some {of your land} to a fellow Israelite or if you buy {some land} from one of them, you must treat that person fairly because he is your fellow Israelite. **15**Pay another Israelite for his land an amount depending on the number of years since the last celebration of restoring. He should sell it for an amount based on how many years that you can harvest until the next time for restoring. **16**If there will be many years before the next time for restoring, the price will be higher. If there will be only a few years until the next time for restoring, the price will be lower. He is really selling you the number of crops you can harvest before the next year of restoring. **17**Do not cheat each other. Instead, honor your God. Remember: I, Yahweh, am your God.

18Obey all my rules and instructions carefully. If you do that, you will continue to live safely in your country. **19**The crops will grow well on the land, you will have plenty to eat, and you will live safely in your country. **20**But you may ask, 'If we do not plant or harvest our crops during the seventh year, what will we have to eat?' **21**{Do not worry,} I will bless your crops very much during the sixth year. That year there will be enough crops to feed for you for three years. **22**You will be able to plant seed during the eighth year and wait for the crops to grow while still eating the food grown in the sixth year. You will continue to eat it until you harvest your crops in the ninth year.

23You must not sell any of your land to belong to someone else permanently, because the land is not yours. It is really mine, and you are only living on it temporarily like foreigners {and farming it} for me. **24**Throughout the country that you will possess, you must remember that if someone sells some of his land to you, he is permitted to buy it back from you at any time.

25So if one of your fellow Israelites becomes poor and sells some of his property, his closest relative (that is, his redeemer) may come and buy that land back from you for the poor man. **26**However, even if a man has no one to buy the land for him, he may prosper again and save enough money to buy that land back. **27**He must calculate how many years there will be until the next year of restoring. Then he must pay, to the man who bought the land, the money that the other man would have earned by growing crops on that land for those years. The buyer must sell it back to the original owner. **28**But if the original owner does not save enough money to buy back the land that he sold, it will continue to belong to the man who bought it until the next year of restoring. In that year the buyer must restore it to him, and the original owner will be able to farm it again.

29If someone sells a house in a city that has a wall around it, he may buy it back from the man who bought it for one year. **30**If he does not buy it back during that year, then the house in the walled city will belong permanently to the man who bought it, and to that man's descendants. He does not need to return it to the original owner in the year of restoring. **31**But houses that are in villages without walls are considered to be as though they were in a field. So if someone sells one of those houses, he may buy it back at any time. And even if he does not buy it, he will take possession of it again at the year of restoring.

32The descendants of Levi are a special case however. If they sell their houses in the cities that belong to them, they may buy them back at any time. **33**But even if they do not buy back those houses, they will become theirs again in

the year of restoring because those houses are in their cities, on land that the other Israelites had given to them.
34But they may not sell the pastureland near their towns. It must belong to the original owners permanently.

35If one of your fellow Israelites becomes poor and is unable to buy what he needs, others of you must help him as you would help a foreigner who is living among you temporarily. You will help him stay living in your country. **36**If you lend money to him, do not make him pay back more than he borrowed. Instead, show by what you do that you honor your God; you must help that Israelite in order that he will be able to continue to live among you. **37**If you lend him money, do not make him pay back more than he borrowed. If you sell food to him, charge him only what you paid for it. **38**Remember: I am Yahweh your God. I brought you out of Egypt to be your God and to give you the land of Canaan.

39If one of your fellow Israelites becomes poor and sells himself to you, do not force him to work like a slave.
40Treat him as you treat workers whom you hire or like someone who is living on your land temporarily. He must work for you only until the year of restoring. **41**During that year, you must free him and his children, and he may go back to his family and to the property that his ancestors owned. **42**You will do this because all the Israelites are my slaves. I freed them from being slaves in Egypt. So none of you should buy each other and make each other into slaves. **43**And do not treat the Israelites whom you buy cruelly. Instead, honor your God.

44If you want to have slaves, you may buy them from nearby people groups. **45**You may also buy some of the foreigners who are living temporarily among you, and members of their clans that were born in your country. You may own them **46**for the rest of your life. After you die, your children may own them. But you must not act in brutal ways toward your fellow Israelites, because they are your relatives.

47Suppose a foreigner who is living among you becomes rich, and a fellow Israelite becomes poor and sells himself to that foreigner or to a member of his clan. **48**Even after he sells himself, someone may pay back his debt so he can go free. One of his relatives may pay back his debt so he can go free. **49**An uncle or a cousin or another relative in his clan may pay back his debt so he can go free. Or, if he prospers and gets enough money, he may pay back his own debt so he can go free. **50**He and his master must count the number of years from when he sold himself to the next year of restoring. The price he pays to the man who bought him will depend on the standard pay that a master would give to a hired worker for that number of years. **51**If there are a lot of years that remain until the year of restoring, he must pay a larger amount of the money to go free. **52**If there are only a few years that remain until the year of restoring, he and his master must agree on a smaller amount for him to go free. **53**While he works for a foreign master, the master must treat him like he would treat an annual hired worker. All of you Israelites must make sure that the foreigner does not treat him cruelly.

54And even if a fellow Israelite who has sold himself to a foreigner is not able to pay to go free by any of these ways, he and his children must go free in the year of restoring. **55**This is because the Israelites are my slaves. I freed them from being slaves in Egypt to be my slaves. Remember: I am Yahweh your God.

Chapter 26

1Do not make idols because they are useless. Do not set up carved figures or sacred stones to worship {as if they were God}. Do not put on your property a stone that someone has carved so you can bow down to it. Worship only me, Yahweh your God. **2**Honor my sacred festivals by celebrating them. Honor the place where you worship me. Remember: I am Yahweh.

3If you carefully obey all my instructions, **4**I will send rain for you at the proper times in order that crops will grow on your land and there will be plenty of fruit on your trees. **5**You will continue harvesting and threshing grain until it is time to harvest grapes, and you will continue harvesting grapes until it is time to start planting things for the following year. You will have all the food that you want to eat, and you will live safely in your land.

6Furthermore, I will make you live peacefully in your country. When you go to sleep, you will not be afraid. I will get
rid of the dangerous animals from your country. As for raids or wars, there will be none in your country. **7**In fact,
you will chase away your enemies and kill them with your weapons. **8**Five of you will chase away a hundred of
them, a hundred of you will chase away ten thousand of them, and you will kill them with your weapons.

9What's more, I will bless you and cause you to have many children. And I will do what I said that I would do in the
covenant that I made with you. **10**While you are still eating food from last year's harvest, you will have to move
some of it to make space to store the food from the current harvest. **11**I will live with you, and I will never despise
you. **12**I will always be among you and continue to be your God, and you will continue to be my people. **13**I am
Yahweh your God, the one who brought you out of Egypt so that you would no longer be the Egyptians' slaves.
When you were there, it was as though you were animals that were pulling plows for the people of Egypt, but I
broke the bars of the yokes that they had put around your necks. I freed you so you could walk with your heads up.

14But suppose you pay no attention to me; suppose you refuse to obey what I have told you to do. **15**Suppose that
you reject my decrees and despise my laws and do not obey me, but that instead you reject the covenant that I
made with you. **16**In that case, these are the things that I will personally do to you: I will suddenly send disasters
that will ruin you. You will have diseases that cannot be cured and fevers that will cause you to become blind; these
will slowly kill you. It will be useless for you to plant your fields, because your enemies will eat the crops that grow.
17I will reject you, so your enemies will conquer you. People who hate you will rule over you, and {you will be so
frightened that} you will run away even if they are not chasing you.

18But after all these things happen to you, if you still refuse to obey me, I will continue to punish you again and
again for sinning {against me}. **19**I will punish you so much that you will no longer be stubborn or proud. I will not
let any rain fall in your land. It will be as though the sky were made of iron and the ground were as hard as bronze.
20You will uselessly work very hard to plant seeds, because crops will not grow in the hard soil in your fields, and
fruit will not grow on your trees.

21If you stubbornly and hostilely continue disobeying me, I will send plague after plague on you to punish you for
sinning against me like that. **22**I will send wild animals to attack you, and they will kill your little children and
destroy your cattle. There will be very few of you who will remain alive, with the result that there will be very few
people traveling about on the roads in your country.

23When you experience those things that I do to punish you, if you still do not pay attention to me, and if you
continue to act against me, **24**I myself will act against you, and I will punish you again and again for sinning against
me. **25**I will send armies to you to punish you for not doing the things that I commanded you to do in the covenant
that I made with you. If you try to escape from your enemies by hiding behind your city walls, I will send plagues to
you, and I will allow your enemies to capture you. **26**When I destroy your supplies of food, there will be very little
flour with which to make bread. As a result, ten women will be able to bake all their bread in only one oven. When
the bread is baked, each woman will divide it among the members of her family, but there will be very little for
each one, and when they have eaten all of it, they will still be hungry.

27After all those things happen, if you still do not obey me, if you still act against me, **28**I will be very angry with
you, and I will act against you. I myself will punish you again and again for sinning. **29**You will be so hungry that
you will kill your sons and daughters and eat their flesh. **30**I will destroy the places on high hills where you have
worshiped idols. I will smash the altars where you burn incense to worship your gods. I will cause people to pile
your dead bodies on the lifeless figures of your idols. I will detest you. **31**I will ruin your cities and empty the
buildings that you built for worshiping your idols. If you burn offerings on an altar, I will refuse to enjoy their
scents. **32**I will completely ruin your country. When your enemies capture it, they will be shocked at what
happened. **33**I will enable your enemies to kill you with their swords. I will cause them to scatter the rest of you
among other people groups. I will make sure that they ruin your country and destroy your cities. **34**After that
happens, as long as you are living in your enemies' countries, no one will be in the land and it will finally be able to
rest. During this time, the land will enjoy the sabbath rests it should have had. **35**During all the time that no one is
in your land, it will rest—the rest that you never gave it during the sabbath rest years when you lived there.

36As for you people who will remain alive in the countries to which your enemies will have taken you, I will make you very afraid, so when you hear the wind blowing leaves, you will run away. You will run like someone is trying to kill you, and you will fall down even though no one is chasing you. **37**You will run as if a man with a sword were chasing you, and you will fall down, even though no one is coming behind you. You will stumble over each other trying to flee. You will not be able to stand and fight your enemies. **38**Many of you will die in your enemies' countries. **39**And those of you who remain alive will slowly die and rot in your enemies' countries because you and your ancestors all sinned so much.

40But if your descendants confess that they and their ancestors sinned against me, acted unfaithfully toward me, and were hostile to me— **41**because of that I became hostile to them and forced them to go to their enemies' countries—if your descendants humble themselves, stop being very stubborn and admit that they are guilty, **42**I will keep my promises about the land {of Canaan} that I made in the covenant that I made {with your ancestors} Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. **43**But before that happens, I will force my people to leave their land, with the result that the land will be able to rest while no one is in it, and while I am punishing the people for rejecting my laws and hating my decrees. **44**But I will still not reject them or hate them and destroy them completely in their enemies' countries. I will not cancel the covenant that I made with them because I am still Yahweh their God. **45**I will keep the promises from the covenant that I made with your ancestors when I brought them out of Egypt, something that the people of all nations heard about. I did this so that I, Yahweh, would be your God."

46Those are the commandments, the decrees, and the laws that Yahweh established on Mount Sinai between himself and the Israelite people by giving them to Moses to tell to them.

Chapter 27

1Yahweh also said to Moses, **2**"Tell the Israelites these things for me: 'If a man solemnly promises to set apart {another} person to {belong only to} Yahweh, {Yahweh will be willing to set that person free from having to do that if the responsible man} pays the priest an amount of money. **3**The priest must calculate the amount of money in terms of the silver pieces that they use in Yahweh's sacred tent.

{You must pay:}

50 pieces of silver for men who are between 20 and 60 years old;

430 pieces of silver for adult women who are between 20 and 60 years old;

520 pieces of silver for young men who are between 5 and 20 years old;

10 pieces of silver for young women who are between 5 and 20 years old;

65 pieces of silver for boys who are between 1 month and 5 years old;

3 pieces of silver for girls who are between 1 month and 5 years old;

715 pieces of silver for men who are more than 60 years old;

and 10 pieces of silver for women who are more than 60 years old.

8If anyone who has made such a solemn promise is very poor and unable to pay to set free the person whom he has given to Yahweh, he must take that person to the priest. The priest will set the price for freeing him to an amount that the person can pay.

9If someone solemnly promises Yahweh to give him an animal that is acceptable to him, that animal becomes very special to Yahweh; it belongs to him alone. **10**The person who promised to give it must not give another animal instead of the one that he promised. He must not substitute a bad one for a good one or even a better one than

the one offered. If he tries to do that, both animals will become dedicated to Yahweh. **11**If the animal that he wishes to give to Yahweh is a kind that is unacceptable as an offering, he must take the animal to the priest. **12**The priest then will decide what its value is, according to the animal's quality. Whatever value the priest sets will be the value, and that is the price of the animal. **13**If the man who gave the animal later decides that he wants to buy it back, he must pay to the priest that price plus an added one-fifth.

14Similarly, if someone dedicates his house, setting it apart for the honor of Yahweh, the priest will decide how much it is worth, which will depend on the house's condition. Whatever the priest says that it is worth, that will be its value. **15**If a man sets apart his house for the honor of Yahweh, but later he wants to buy it back, he must pay that price plus an added one-fifth, and then the house will belong to him again.

16If someone sets apart some of the property that belongs to him and his family for the honor of Yahweh, its value will be determined by the quantity of seed that would be needed to sow that entire tract of land. It will be 50 pieces of silver for each 220 liters of seed. **17**If he dedicates the field during the year for restoring, its value will be the full amount. **18**But if he dedicates his field after the restoration year, the priest will calculate the remaining years to the next one and lower the price accordingly. **19**If the person who dedicated the field later wants to buy it back, he must pay back the field's price plus an added one-fifth. Then the field will belong to that man again. **20**However, if he does not buy it back, or if he also sells it to someone else, he may never buy it back again. **21**When the year for restoring comes, Yahweh will claim the field permanently as his holy property, and the priest will receive it.

22If someone dedicates some land that he has bought to Yahweh, land which is not part of the land that his family has always owned, **23**the priest must count the number of years until the next year of restoring to determine how much it is worth. The man must pay that amount to the priest on that day. His payment is a holy gift to Yahweh. **24**However, in the year for restoring, he will restore the land to the person from whom he bought it, the person whose family had always owned that land. **25**The priest must always calculate the amount of money in terms of the silver pieces called shekels that they use in Yahweh's sacred tent. One piece called a shekel is equal to 20 smaller pieces called gerahs.

26Since firstborn animals already belong to Yahweh, no one may dedicate the firstborn of any cow or sheep for any purpose. **27**If someone gives Yahweh a {firstborn} animal that is not one of the acceptable kinds, he may buy it back by paying its standard price plus an added one-fifth of its value. If he does not buy it back, the priest must sell it for its standard price.

28However, if someone permanently dedicates anything he owns like a person, animal, or family land to Yahweh, you must not restore it or sell it. Anything that you permanently dedicate becomes Yahweh's especially sacred property.

29You will not let anyone live from the people whom Yahweh has commanded you to completely destroy. You must execute them all.

30One tenth of all the crops and grain or fruit that is produced on anyone's land is sacred and belongs to Yahweh. **31**If anyone wants to buy back any of that tenth, he must pay to the priest what it is worth plus an added one-fifth. **32**One of every ten domestic animals belongs to Yahweh. When someone counts his cattle and sheep as they pass under his walking stick, he must set aside every tenth one for Yahweh. **33**When he does that, he must not pick out the good ones or leave the bad ones or substitute bad ones for good ones. If he tries to substitute one animal for another, he must set aside both animals for Yahweh, and he may not buy them back.'"

34Those are the commands that Yahweh gave to Moses on Mount Sinai to tell to the Israelites.

Joshua

Chapter 1

1After Moses the servant of Yahweh died, Yahweh spoke to Joshua son of Nun. He had been Moses' helper. Yahweh said, **2**"{You know that} my servant Moses has died. So now get ready to cross over the Jordan River, you and all these people. Enter the land that I will soon give to all of you Israelites. **3**I will certainly give you every place where you walk in that land, just as I promised Moses. **4**That land will extend from the wilderness {in the south} to the Lebanon mountains {in the northwest}, to the Euphrates River {in the northeast}, and to the Great Sea {in the west} where the sun goes down. It will include all the land where the Hittites live. **5**No people group will be able to defeat you as long as you live. I will help you as I helped Moses. I promise that I will not abandon you and I will never leave you.

6Be strong and brave, because you are the one who will lead these people so that they can possess this land that I promised to give to their ancestors. **7**Just be strong and very brave so that you can be sure to obey all the laws that my servant Moses gave to you. {Obey those laws} so that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not stop obeying any of them. **8**Make sure to read continually the laws that God gave Moses. Constantly think about those laws so that you will carefully obey each one. If you do that, then you will be successful in the things you do. **9**Do not forget that I have commanded you to be strong and brave. Do not be afraid and do not be discouraged, because I, Yahweh your God, will be with you wherever you go."

10So Joshua commanded the leaders of the people of Israel, **11**"Go throughout the camp and give these orders to the people: 'Prepare all the food that you will take with you, because the day after tomorrow we will cross the Jordan River. We are going across in order to conquer the land that Yahweh, our God, has promised to give us.'"

12Then Joshua spoke to the people of the tribes that were the descendants of Reuben and Gad. He also spoke to the people of half of the tribe of Manasseh. {All those people were going to settle on the east side of the Jordan River.} Joshua said, **13**"Keep in mind the orders that Moses the servant of Yahweh gave you. Moses said, 'Yahweh your God will give you this land so that you can live here peacefully. **14**Your wives, your little children, and your cows, sheep, and goats may stay here in this land that Moses gave you on the east side of the Jordan River. But all the men of fighting age{, twenty years old or older,} must cross the Jordan River. They must go ahead of the people of the other tribes. Your soldiers must take all their weapons so that they can help their fellow Israelites. **15**You must help your fellow Israelites to fight against the inhabitants of the land until Yahweh has enabled them to defeat the inhabitants and settle in the land permanently and live peacefully there. That is what Yahweh has done for you in the land he has given you. Yahweh our God will do the same thing for them. After you help them, then your soldiers may return to live in this land that Yahweh's servant Moses gave to you here on the east side of the Jordan River."

16The people answered Joshua, "We will do everything you have told us to do, and we will go wherever you tell us to go. **17**As we obeyed all that Moses told us to do, so we will obey all that you tell us to do. We pray that Yahweh your God will help you just as he helped Moses. **18**We will execute anyone who refuses to obey what you say and does not do everything that you command. But {we want you, Joshua), to be strong and brave!"

Chapter 2

1Then Joshua son of Nun chose two men from their camp at Shittim. He told them, "Go secretly and find out all that you can about the land, especially about the city of Jericho." They left the camp and went to Jericho. A prostitute whose name was Rahab lived in that city. They stayed in her house that night. **2**Someone told the king of Jericho,

“Be careful! Some Israelite men have come here tonight to spy on our land!” **3**So the king of Jericho sent
messengers to Rahab. They told her, “We know that some men are staying in your house. Surrender them to the
king, because they have come here to spy on our land!” **4**But Rahab had already hidden the two men {inside her
house}. She told the messengers, “Yes, it is true that those men came to me. But I did not know that they were
spies. **5**Those men left Jericho at dusk, before the guards closed the city gates. I do not know where they were
going. But if you hurry, you might catch up with them.” **6**{But she was lying.} She had actually taken the two men
up to the {flat} roof of her house. There she had hidden them under bundles of flax that she had laid out {to dry}
on her roof. **7**Soldiers looked for the men all along the road that leads from Jericho to the place where people can
walk across the Jordan River. {They thought the men would travel on that road back to the Israelite camp.} As soon
as the soldiers left the city, guards shut the city gates {to keep the spies from escaping if they were actually still in
the city}.

8The two men expected to sleep on the roof, hiding under the flax stalks. But Rahab went up to the roof and spoke
with them before they went to sleep. **9**She said to them, “We know that Yahweh is going to enable you Israelites to
conquer this land. As a result, all the people living in this land are so afraid of you that we will not be able to fight
with you. **10**We have heard about how Yahweh dried up the water of the Sea of Reeds so that you could cross it
when you left Egypt. We also heard how you killed Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorite people group who
lived on the eastern side of the Jordan River. We heard how you totally destroyed them. **11**When we heard about
those things, we were very dismayed. Because of the way your God has helped you, we no longer feel courageous
enough to fight against you. {We know that} Yahweh, whom you worship, is the true God. He is the God who rules
over everything. {And if he is helping you, then we cannot resist you.} **12**So now I want you to swear a solemn oath
to me by Yahweh that you will act kindly to me and my family because I have acted kindly toward you. I also want
you to give me some proof that you will do what you promise, **13**Spare the lives of my father and mother, my
brothers and sisters, and all of their families. Promise me that you Israelites will not kill us {when you destroy this
city}.” **14**The two men told her, “May Yahweh cause us to die if we let anyone kill you or your family! If you do not tell
others what we are planning to do, then we will act kindly toward you and all your family. We will not kill you when
Yahweh enables us to conquer this land.” **15**{One of} the outside walls of the house where Rahab lived was part of
the wall that was around the city of Jericho. She fastened a rope and hung it outside a window that was in that wall.
That allowed the men to climb down the wall {and escape from the city, even though the king’s men had closed the
gates}. **16**Then she said to them, “When you leave the city, go up into the hills so that the men who are searching
for you will not find you. Hide in caves in the hills for three days, until the men who are searching for you return to
the city. Then you will be able to safely return to your camp.” **17**The two men {gave her a red cord, and} said to her,
“This is what you must do. If you do not do this, we will not have to do what you made us promise to do. **18**When
we come into the land, you must tie this red cord in the window through which you let us down. You must gather
together your father and mother, your brothers and sisters, and their families inside your house. **19**If anyone in
your family leaves the house and goes into the street, (our soldiers} will kill them, and we will not be guilty. But if
they injure anyone who is in this house with you, we will be guilty. **20**But if you tell anyone what we are planning to
do, we will not have to do what you made us promise to do.” **21**Rahab said, “I agree to do what you say.” Then she
sent them away, and they left her house. And she tied the red cord so it would hang out of the window. **22**When the
two men left the city, they went up into the hills. They stayed there for three days while the men who had been sent
by the king continued to search for them. They searched all along the road, but they did not find the two men. {So
they gave up and returned to Jericho.} **23**Then the two men started back toward their camp. They came down from
the hills, crossed the Jordan River, and returned to the Israelite camp. They told Joshua everything that had
happened to them. **24**They said to Joshua, “We are certain that Yahweh is going to enable us to conquer that whole
land. We know that because all the people there are very afraid of us.”

Chapter 3

1Joshua {and all the other Israelites} got up early the next morning. They left their camp at Shittim and went down
to the Jordan River. They camped there before they crossed over the river. **2**They rested for one day, and the
morning after that, the leaders of the people went throughout the camp. **3**They instructed the people, “When you

see some of the priests, who are the descendants of Levi, carrying the sacred chest of Yahweh your God, then {you will know} it is time to leave this place and follow the sacred chest. **4**Since you have not gone this way before, you do not know where you should go. So you must follow the priests} so that you will know the direction that you should travel, but stay at least 1, 000 yards away from the sacred chest. Do not come closer than that." **5**Then Joshua told the Israelites, "Perform the ceremonies that will make yourselves acceptable to Yahweh, because tomorrow he is going to do things for you that will amaze you!" **6**Then Joshua said to the priests, "Carry the sacred chest and go in front of the people." So they lifted up the sacred chest and went in front of the people. **7**Then Yahweh said to Joshua, "This is the day when I will begin to cause all the people of Israel to honor you greatly as their leader. They will understand that I am helping you just as I helped Moses. **8**Tell the priests who are carrying the sacred chest, 'When you come to the edge of the Jordan River, stand still in the water.'" **9**Then Joshua said to the people of Israel, "Come close to me and listen to what Yahweh, your God, will tell you." **10**{When they came near}, Joshua said, "This is how you will know that God, who lives and can do anything, acts on your behalf. You will certainly see him expel from the land the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites. **11**Know with certainty that Yahweh is the one who rules over all the earth. The sacred chest belongs to him, and the priests will carry it into the Jordan River ahead of you. **12**So choose 12 men, one from each of the tribes of Israel. **13**When the priests who are carrying the chest of Yahweh, who rules over all the earth, put their feet in the waters of the Jordan River, the water will stop flowing. The water coming from upstream will pile up {because Yahweh will cause them to be blocked}." **14**So the Israelites packed up their tents so that they could go across the Jordan River. The priests who were carrying the sacred chest went in front of the people. **15**{It was springtime,} when people harvest their crops, and at that time the Jordan River floods over all its banks. But the moment the priests who carried the sacred chest reached the edge of the river and stepped into the water, **16**the water stopped flowing. The water piled up far upstream, at a town named Adam, near the city named Zarethan. The water stopped flowing down to the Sea of Arabah, which people also call the Sea of Salt. {The water} completely stopped flowing, and the people were able to cross the river near Jericho. **17**The priests who were carrying the sacred chest of Yahweh stood on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan {riverbed}. They continued to stand there until all the people of Israel had crossed the river on dry ground.

Chapter 4

1After all the people of Israel had finished crossing the Jordan River, Yahweh said to Joshua, **2**"Choose 12 men, one from each tribe {of Israel}. **3**Tell them to pick up 12 stones from the middle of the dry Jordan {riverbed} where the priests are standing. Tell them to carry those stones and put them down at the place you will stay tonight." **4**{So Joshua chose 12 men,} one from each tribe of Israel. Then Joshua called them together **5**and said to them, "Go into the middle of the Jordan {riverbed}, in front of {the priests who are standing and holding} the sacred chest of Yahweh your God. Each of you must pick up a {large} stone, one for each tribe. Each of you is to carry a stone on his shoulder. That will be a total of 12 stones for the 12 tribes of the people of Israel. **6**These stones will be a monument for you to see. In the future, your children will ask, 'What do these stones mean?' **7**Tell them that {these stones are here} because Yahweh blocked the water in the Jordan River{so that it stopped flowing} when the priests were carrying the sacred chest of Yahweh. When the chest was carried into the Jordan River, Yahweh blocked the water {so that we were able to cross the Jordan on dry ground}. These stones will cause our descendants to remember forever what Yahweh has done." **8**So those 12 men did exactly what Joshua had told them to do. They went and picked up 12 {large} stones from the middle of the Jordan {riverbed}, one stone for each of the tribes of Israel. That was what Yahweh had told Joshua. Then they carried the stones to their camp. They put the stones down there. **9**Then Joshua {took} 12 {other large} stones and stacked them in a pile in the middle of the Jordan {riverbed} where the priests who carried the sacred chest were standing. And those stones are still there. **10**The priests who carried the chest remained standing in the middle of the Jordan {riverbed} until the Israelites had finished doing everything that Yahweh had commanded Joshua to tell them to do. These were the same instructions that Moses had given to Joshua. The Israelites crossed {the riverbed} quickly. **11**As soon as all the people had crossed over, then the priests carried the sacred chest of Yahweh across the river. The people watched them do that. **12**The soldiers from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, crossed over ahead of the rest of the Israelite people. They brought their weapons with them. That was what Moses had ordered them to

do. **13**As Yahweh was watching, about 40, 000 soldiers crossed the riverbed. These men were ready fight in the Israelite army. They were heading for the plains of Jericho, where they would fight a battle. **14**On that day, Yahweh caused all the people of Israel to honor Joshua greatly as their leader. And they deeply respected Joshua his entire life, just as they had deeply respected Moses. **15**Yahweh said to Joshua, **16**"Order the priests who are carrying the sacred chest of the testimony to come up from the Jordan {riverbed}." **17**So Joshua commanded the priests to come up from the Jordan {riverbed}. **18**Then the priests, carrying the sacred chest of Yahweh, came up out of the Jordan {riverbed}. As soon as the priests walked up out of the riverbed onto the riverbank, the water of the Jordan River started flowing again, and the river overflowed its banks as it had been doing before. **19**It was on the tenth day of the first month of their year that the Israelite people crossed over the Jordan {riverbed} and camped at a place called Gilgal. That is east of the land near the city of Jericho. **20**At Gilgal, Joshua set up the 12 {large} stones that the 12 men had carried from the Jordan {riverbed}. **21**Then Joshua said to the people of Israel, "In the future, when your descendants ask, 'Why are these stones here?' **22**tell them, 'This is where we Israelites crossed the Jordan River on dry ground.' **23**While you were watching, Yahweh, the God you worship, dried up the river for you, until we had all crossed it. Yahweh, the God we worship, did {to the Jordan River} exactly what he did to the Sea of Reeds. He caused that to become dry, as our parents were watching, until they all crossed it. **24**{Yahweh did that} in order that all the people groups of the earth would know that he is very powerful. And because you have seen this, as a result, you will always revere Yahweh your God."

Chapter 5

1The leaders of other people groups heard about how Yahweh had dried up the water of the Jordan River in front of the people of Israel so that they could cross it. Those leaders included all the kings of the Amorites who {lived} on the west side of the Jordan River, toward the {Great} Sea. They also included all the kings of the Canaanites, who {lived} close to the {Great} Sea. When those kings heard {what Yahweh had done}, they became very afraid and no longer desired to fight {the Israelites}. **2**While {the Israelites were staying at Gilgal,} Yahweh said to Joshua, "{Someone had circumcised the Israelite males who lived in Egypt before they left there. Now} make knives from flint stones and circumcise all the Israelite males whom no one has yet circumcised." **3**So Joshua {commanded the people} to make knives from flint stones and circumcise the Israelite males at {a place that people now call} Circumcision Hill. **4**This is why they circumcised the Israelite males at this time. All of the men who left Egypt, all those old enough to be soldiers, had died in the desert after they left Egypt. **5**Someone had circumcised those men when they were children in Egypt. But no one had circumcised the boys whose mothers gave birth to them while they were in the wilderness, after they left Egypt. **6**The people of Israel traveled through the wilderness for 40 years, until all the men who were old enough to be soldiers, who had left Egypt, had died. This happened because they had not obeyed Yahweh. So Yahweh swore to them that they would not be able to enter the land that he had promised to our ancestors. He said that he would give that very fertile land to us, their descendants. **7**The sons of those who had disobeyed Yahweh were the ones whom Joshua and other Israelite leaders circumcised {at Gilgal}. They circumcised them there because no one had done that while they were traveling in the wilderness. **8**After the leaders had circumcised all the Israelite males, they remained in the camp and rested until they had healed. **9**Then Yahweh said to Joshua, "People thought badly of you because they considered you to be just former Egyptian slaves. But now I have made you a distinct nation." Because of that, people called that place Gilgal, and it still has that name even now. **10**On the evening of the fourteenth day of that month, while the people of Israel were staying at Gilgal, on the plain near the city of Jericho, they celebrated the Passover festival. **11**The day after they celebrated the Passover festival, they gathered barley grain in that area. They made some of the barley grain into unleavened bread and ate, and they roasted and ate some of it. **12**The next day, {Yahweh} stopped {sending} manna for the people of Israel {to eat}. From then on, they ate food that grew in the land of Canaan. **13**One day, when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw someone who appeared to be a man standing in front of him. The man was holding a sword in his hand. Joshua approached him and asked him, "Are you going to fight for us or against us?" **14**The man replied, "I am not a soldier in any human army. Rather, I am the commander of Yahweh's army. I have come {here to help you}." Then Joshua very respectfully got down on his knees and touched his face to the ground. Joshua said to him, "What do you want me to do? I will do it." **15**The commander of Yahweh's army replied, "The

ground on which you are standing is holy {because I am here}. So take off your sandals." So Joshua took off his sandals.

Chapter 6

1Because {the people of Jericho were afraid} of the army of Israel, {the guards of Jericho} tightly shut the city gates. No one was allowed to enter {the city} or leave {it}. **2**Then Yahweh said to Joshua, "Pay attention {to what I am about to tell you}! I am going to enable your army to conquer the city of Jericho and its king and its soldiers. **3**You and your army must march around the city once a day for six days. **4**Tell seven priests to march around {with you and the army}. Each of the priests must carry a ram's horn that they can blow as they march ahead of the sacred chest of Yahweh. On the seventh day, you and the army and the seven priests must march around the city seven times, and the priests must be blowing the horns while they march. **5**{After they have all marched around the city seven times, then} the priests must blow their horns very loudly. When you and the Israelite soldiers hear that, you must all shout very loudly. Then the city wall will collapse onto itself, and all the Israelite soldiers will go straight into the city." **6**So Joshua summoned the priests and said to them, "Tell {four} priests to carry Yahweh's sacred chest, and tell seven {other} priests to carry horns and walk ahead of the sacred chest of Yahweh." **7**And he told the Israelite soldiers and priests, "Start marching. March around the city with some soldiers with weapons marching in front. Behind them will march the seven priests with horns, and behind them will march the {four} priests carrying Yahweh's sacred chest." **8**After Joshua told them that, the seven priests, each one carrying a horn, began marching ahead of Yahweh's sacred chest while blowing their horns. {The four priests who} were carrying Yahweh's sacred chest followed them. **9**The group of soldiers carrying their weapons marched in front of the priests who were blowing on their horns. The rest of the soldiers followed the sacred chest. While {they were all marching, the priests} kept blowing their horns. **10**But {all the Israelites, except the priests who were blowing their horns, were silent, because} Joshua had commanded them to say nothing. He had told them, "Do not make a war cry. Do not yell or say even one word until the seventh day {when we have walked around the city and} I tell you to shout. On that day, you must shout!" **11**So the men carrying Yahweh's sacred chest and all the others did what Joshua told them to do. They marched around the city one time. Then they all returned to their camp and stayed there that night. **12**The next morning, Joshua and the soldiers and priests got up early and the {four} priests again carried Yahweh's sacred chest. **13**The seven priests who were carrying horns went in front of {the four priests who were carrying} Yahweh's sacred chest. The seven priests were continually walking ahead of the sacred chest and making loud blasts with their horns as they marched. The armed soldiers walked in front of them and the rest of the soldiers followed the sacred chest of Yahweh. All this time, the seven priests kept blowing their horns. **14**So on the second day, they {again} marched around the city one time and {then} returned to their camp. They did the same thing for six days. **15**On the seventh day, they got up as soon as the sun rose, and they all marched around the city as they had done the previous six days. But this time they marched around the city seven times. **16**As they were marching around the city the seventh time, when the priests were blowing the long blasts on their horns, Joshua commanded the Israelite soldiers, "Shout, because Yahweh is about to enable you to capture this city! **17**Yahweh has declared that you must destroy the city and everything in it {to show that} it belongs to him. You must only spare Rahab the prostitute and all the people who are in her house with her, because she hid the spies we sent {to Jericho}. **18**But be very careful of this: Yahweh has declared that we must destroy the people, animals, and things in the city. So you certainly must not take any of the things in the city. If you take anything, you will cause Yahweh to destroy our people and cause terrible things to happen to us. **19**All the silver and gold and all the iron and bronze articles{that you find}, you must set apart for Yahweh. You must put those things in his treasury." **20**So they obeyed Joshua. When the Israelite army heard the priests begin blowing a long blast on their horns, then they shouted loudly, and the wall of the city collapsed! Then the Israelite army went up into the city. Each soldier went straight into the city from wherever he was standing when the wall fell. In that way, the Israelite army captured the city. **21**They killed every living thing in Jericho. They killed all the men, women, boys, and girls. They also killed all the cattle and sheep and donkeys. **22**Then Joshua said to the two men who had spied on the land, "Go to the house of that prostitute woman {who helped you}. Bring her out, along with all her family, just as you promised her you would do." **23**So, the young men who had spied on the land went and brought Rahab out of her house. They brought out her father, mother, brothers, and all her relatives {who were with her}. They brought them to a place

outside the camp of Israel's army. **24**Then the Israelite soldiers burned the city, along with everything in it. But {they saved) the silver and gold and articles of bronze and iron and put them into the treasury of things for the tent of meeting. **25**But Joshua allowed Rahab the prostitute to live, along with her father's household and everyone who was with her. He did that because she hid the spies that Joshua sent to spy on Jericho. She has lived among the people of Israel until this time. **26**After Joshua and his soldiers had destroyed the city of Jericho, he made each of the Israelites swear that they would not rebuild the city. He said, "Yahweh will curse anyone who rebuilds this city, Jericho. When that person lays its foundation, Yahweh will cause his oldest son to die. When {he finishes building the city wall and} sets up its gates, Yahweh will cause his youngest son to die." {All the people agreed that this should be the punishment for anyone who rebuilt the city.} **27**Yahweh helped Joshua, and as a result, he became famous throughout the whole land of Canaan.

Chapter 7

1{Yahweh had commanded the Israelites to show that all the things they found in Jericho belonged to him. To do that, the Israelites were to destroy them or put them in his treasury.} But there was a man from the tribe of Judah whose name was Achan. He was the son of Karmi, the grandson of Zabdi, and the great-grandson of Zerah. He disobeyed what Yahweh had commanded the Israelites. He took for himself some of the things Yahweh had said belonged only to him. Therefore, Yahweh became very angry with the Israelites. **2**Now Joshua told some of his men to go from the city of Jericho to the town of Ai. That town was east of the city of Bethel and near the town of Beth Aven. Joshua said to them, "Go to Ai and see what we need to do to conquer it." So the men went and did what Joshua had instructed them to do. **3**When they returned, they told him, "Only a small number of people live in Ai. So just send 2,000 or 3,000 men to attack them. There is no need to send all of our soldiers." **4**So about 3, 000 Israelite men went to attack Ai. But the men of Ai defeated the men of Israel so badly that the men of Israel ran away. **5**The soldiers of Ai killed about 36 Israelite soldiers. They chased the rest of them from the city gate to the stone quarries. They even killed Israelite soldiers on the slopes {that led back down to the Jordan River}. When the Israelite people saw this, they became very afraid. They no longer had the courage to fight. **6**Joshua and the leaders of Israel tore their clothes {to show that they were very sad that their enemies had defeated them}. They lay down on the ground in front of the sacred chest of Yahweh, and they stayed there until evening time. They also put dirt on their heads {to show that they were very sad about what had happened}. **7**Then Joshua prayed and said, "Lord Yahweh, you brought us Israelites safely across the Jordan River. So I do not understand why you are now allowing the Amorites to destroy us. I really wish that we had stayed on the other side of the Jordan River! Then we would not be in this situation. **8**O Lord, I do not know what to say, now that we Israelites have run away from our enemies. **9**The Canaanites and all the other people who are living in this land will hear {that the army of the city of Ai defeated us}. Then they will surround us and kill us all! Then people will no longer think that you are a great and powerful God!" **10**But Yahweh said to Joshua, "Stand up! Stop lying there with your face in the dirt! **11**The people of Israel have sinned. They have disobeyed the commands that I instructed them to obey. They have taken from the things that I said they must devote to me. They have stolen and been deceptive and put what they have stolen in with their own possessions. **12**That is why the Israelite soldiers could not defeat the soldiers of Ai. That is why they ran away from them. And now Israelites you have become something that someone should destroy. Unless you do as I commanded you and destroy the things you took from Jericho that you were supposed to devote to me, then I will not help you anymore! **13**Now go and tell the people of Israel that they must prepare themselves for what will happen tomorrow. They must perform the rituals that will cause them to become acceptable to me {again}. Tell them that I said that one of you has kept some of the things that I told you to devote to me. Tell them that I said you will not be able to defeat your enemies until you get rid of those things. **14**Tomorrow morning you must present yourselves before me, tribe by tribe. Then I will indicate to you which tribe {the guilty person belongs to}. Then I will indicate to you which clan {from that tribe the guilty person belongs to}. Then I will indicate to you which family he belongs to, and then I will indicate which man {in that family took the things I said you must devote to me}. **15**Then you must {kill and} burn {the body of} the person who has taken some of the things that you should have given to me. You must burn him and his family and everything he owns, because he has disobeyed the agreement that I, Yahweh made with you Israelites, and because he has done a disgraceful act among the people of Israel." **16**Early the next morning, Joshua instructed all the Israelite people to come near {to the sacred tent}, tribe by tribe. {When they did that,} Yahweh indicated that a person from the tribe of Judah {was the one who had

taken the things that the Israelites should have given him}. **17**Then the clans of Judah presented themselves, and Yahweh indicated that someone from the clan of Zerah {was the guilty person). Then the families of Zerah's clan presented themselves, and Yahweh indicated that someone from the family of Zabdi {was the guilty person}. **18**Then Joshua told the men from the family of Zabdi to present themselves. {When they did that,} Yahweh indicated that Achan was the guilty man. He was the son of Carmi, the grandson of Zabdi, the great-grandson of Zerah, and the great-great-grandson of Judah. **19**Then Joshua said to Achan, "Young man, honor Yahweh, the God we Israelites worship, by telling the truth and confessing it before him. Now tell me what you did, and do not try to conceal it from me." **20**Achan replied, "It is true. I have sinned against Yahweh, the God we Israelites worship. This is what I did: **21**I saw among the plunder {from Jericho} a beautiful coat from Babylon. I also saw 200 pieces of silver and a piece of gold that weighed the equivalent of 50 pieces of silver. I wanted those things very much, so I took them. I buried them in the ground under my tent. You will find them there. The silver pieces are buried under the other things." **22**So Joshua sent some men {to find the things that Achan had stolen from Yahweh}. They ran to Achan's tent and found all the things he had hidden there. **23**The men took the things Achan had stolen out of his tent and brought them to Joshua and to the Israelites. Then they spread them out on the ground in front of the sacred tent {as evidence that Achan was guilty of stealing from the plunder, as Yahweh had said an Israelite had done}. **24**Then Joshua and the Israelites brought Achan son of Zerah up to a place that people later called the Valley of Achor. They brought the things he had stolen from Yahweh, and they also brought his sons and daughters and his wife and his cattle and donkeys and sheep and goats. They also brought his tent and everything else that belonged to him. **25**Joshua said, "You have troubled us Israelites greatly, so today Yahweh will trouble you." Then all the people of Israel threw stones at Achan and his family until they died. Then they burned them {and all their possessions} with fire. **26**They piled rocks over the ashes of their corpses, and those rocks are still there now. After that, Yahweh was no longer angry {with the Israelites}. That is why the Israelites named that place the Valley of Achor. People still call it by that name now.

Chapter 8

1Then Yahweh said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid or discouraged {because of what happened last time you fought against the men of Ai}. Take with you all the soldiers you have and go up to Ai {again}. I will certainly enable you to defeat the king of Ai and his people, and I will give you his city and his land. **2**Your army must do to the city of Ai and its people and king the same thing that you did to the city of Jericho and its people and king. But {this time} I will allow you to take all their possessions and keep them for yourselves. Tell some of your soldiers to hide behind the city and prepare to attack it suddenly." **3**So Joshua led all his army toward the city of Ai. He chose 30, 000 of his best soldiers and prepared them to go out during the night. **4**Joshua said to them, "Listen carefully! Some of you must hide on the other side of Ai. Do not go very far from the city. Each one of you must be ready {to attack it}. **5**I and the soldiers who are with me will march toward the city {in the morning}. Then the soldiers who are in the city will come out to fight us, as they did before. We will turn around and start to run away from them. **6**Because they will think that we are running away from them as we did before, they will leave the city and chase after us. While we are running away from them, **7**those of you who are hiding must come out and enter the city and capture it. Yahweh, your God, will enable you to conquer the city. **8**After you capture the city, burn it. Do what Yahweh has commanded us to do. Those are the orders I am giving to you." **9**Then Joshua sent some of the Israelite soldiers to hide and wait at a place between Bethel and Ai. That place was on the west side of Ai. But Joshua slept that night among his other soldiers. **10**Early the next morning, Joshua gathered his soldiers together. Then he and the other Israelite leaders went in front of them to Ai. **11**They all set up their tents close to Ai, just to the north of the city, where all the people of the city could see them. There was a valley between them and the city of Ai. **12**Joshua chose about 5, 000 of his soldiers and told them to go and hide just west of Ai, between Ai and Bethel. **13**So that was how Joshua and the elders {prepared for the battle. They} stationed the main group of Israelite soldiers north of Ai and they stationed the other group on the west side of Ai. That night Joshua went down into the valley. **14**When the king of Ai saw {the Israelite army}, he and all his soldiers got up early {the next morning} and quickly went out of the city to fight them at a place where they had agreed to meet. That place was near the Jordan River valley. But the king of Ai did not know that some of the Israelite soldiers were hiding behind the city, ready to attack it. **15**Joshua and all the Israelite soldiers {who were with him} allowed the army of Ai to push them back. They retreated toward

the wilderness. **16**Then the king of Ai ordered all the men in the city to chase after Joshua and his men. So they left the city and pursued them. **17**All the men of Ai and also the men from the city of Bethel pursued the Israelite army. They did not leave a guard behind to defend their cities. They even left the city {gates} wide open as they went to pursue the soldiers of Israel. **18**Then Yahweh said to Joshua, “Lift up your curved sword and point it toward Ai, because I am going to enable your soldiers to capture it!” So Joshua pointed his curved sword toward Ai. **19**When the Israelite men who were hiding saw Joshua do that, they rushed out from the places where they were hiding and ran into the city. They captured it and quickly set it on fire. **20**When the men of Ai looked back, they saw smoke rising from their city up to the sky. They could not escape in any direction, because the Israelite soldiers stopped running away towards the wilderness and turned back toward them. **21**Joshua and all the Israelite soldiers knew that the men who had been hiding had captured the city and were burning it because they saw the smoke rising. So they turned around and began killing the men of Ai. **22**Meanwhile, the soldiers who had captured the city came out and attacked them {from the rear}. So the men of Ai were {caught} in the middle of the two groups of Israelite soldiers. The Israelites fought against the men of Ai until they killed them all. None of the men of Ai escaped. **23**But the king of Ai was still alive. They captured him and brought him to Joshua. **24**The Israelite soldiers killed all the men of Ai who had come out into the fields that were in the open country to pursue them. When they had killed every one of them, then all the Israelite soldiers went back to Ai and killed everyone who was there. **25**{The Israelites} killed 12, 000 men and women that day. They killed everyone who lived in Ai. **26**Joshua continued to point his curved sword toward Ai until the Israelites had killed all the people who lived in Ai. **27**The Israelite soldiers took for themselves the animals and the other things that had belonged to the people of Ai, just as Yahweh had told Joshua that they should do. **28**Joshua and his soldiers burned Ai and caused it to become a pile of ruins that no one ever rebuilt. It is still an abandoned place now. **29**Joshua hanged the king of Ai on a tree. He left his corpse hanging there until evening. At sunset, Joshua told his men to take the king’s body down from the tree and throw it on the ground at the entrance of the city gate. {After they did that,} they piled a great mound of rocks on top of the king’s corpse. That pile of rocks is still there now. **30**Then Joshua {instructed his men to} build on Ebal Mountain an altar for Yahweh, the God whom the Israelites worship. **31**They built it just as Moses, Yahweh’s servant, had written previously in the book of instructions that Yahweh had given to him. They made the altar from stones that no one had cut. No one had done any work on these stones using iron tools. The Israelites then offered on the altar sacrifices to Yahweh that were burned completely, and they also made fellowship sacrifices. **32**At that place, Joshua wrote on the stones {of the altar} a copy of the instructions that Yahweh had previously given to Moses. The Israelites watched Joshua do this. **33**The leaders, officials, and judges of Israel and all the other Israelites were standing on both sides of the sacred chest. They were all standing facing the Levitical priests who carried the sacred chest of Yahweh. Both native-born Israelites and foreigners who were living among the Israelites were there. Half of the people stood {on one side of the valley} below Gerizim Mountain, and the other half of the people stood {on the other side of the valley} below Ebal Mountain. The sacred chest was {in the valley} between the two groups. This is what Moses, Yahweh’s servant, had previously instructed them to do when he had given instructions for blessing the people of Israel. **34**Then Joshua read {to the people} everything that Moses had written. That included the things Yahweh had instructed them to do and not to do. That also included Yahweh’s teachings and the ways that he said he would bless them {if they obeyed his commands} or curse them {if they disobeyed his commands}. **35**Joshua made sure to read every word that Moses had commanded them. He read every word in front of the entire assembly of Israelites. All the women and children were there as well, and also the foreigners who were living among the people of Israel.

Chapter 9

1All the kings on the west side of the Jordan River heard about what the Israelites had done at Ai. These kings lived in the hilly region, in the western foothills, and along all the coast of the Great Sea as far as Lebanon. They were the kings of the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Once these kings heard about what Israel had done to Ai, **2**they all agreed to gather {their armies} together to fight against Joshua and the Israelite army. **3**However, when the people who lived in the city of Gibeon heard that Joshua’s army had killed all the people of Jericho and Ai, **4**they {decided to act differently toward the Israelites than the other kings had. The Gibeonites} decided to trick {the Israelites}. They sent some of their men to be ambassadors {for their

people}. These men gathered old packs and old leather wine bags that people had mended after they had cracked. Then they put these on the backs of their donkeys. **5**They put on old sandals that people had patched, and they wore old, ragged clothes. They took along bread that was hard and had become crumbled. **6**They went to where Joshua and the other Israelites had set up their tents at Gilgal. They said to Joshua and the Israelite leaders, “We have traveled from a land that is far away. We want you to make a treaty with us.” **7**The Israelite leaders said to these Hivite men, “You might actually live close by us. If you do, we certainly cannot make a treaty with you{, because if we did, then we would be disobeying Yahweh’s command to dispossess all the people-groups who live near us}!” **8**But they replied to Joshua, “We are willing to become your subjects.” But Joshua answered, “What people-group do you belong to, and from what place did you come from?” **9**The men from Gibeon answered him, “We have come here from a faraway country because Yahweh your God has become famous. People have told us about all the {miraculous} things he did {for you} in Egypt. **10**We have also heard that he helped you defeat the two Amorite kings who were on the east side of the Jordan River. These kings were Sihon, who ruled in the city of Heshbon, and Og, who ruled in the city of Ashtaroth in the region of Bashan. **11**So our leaders and the rest of our people said to us, ‘Take some food with you and go to talk with the Israelites. Tell them, “We are willing to become your subjects. So make a peace agreement with us.”’ **12**When we left our homes to come to you, we packed this bread fresh from the oven. But see how it is now dry and has become hard and crumbled. **13**And {when we left our homes to come to you}, these leather wine bags were new. But look at them now! They are old and cracked. Our clothes have become ragged and our sandals have become worn because of our long journey here.” **14**The Israelite leaders looked at the food that the men from Gibeon had brought with them {to see if it was old as they claimed}. But the Israelite leaders did not ask Yahweh what they should do. **15**Then Joshua agreed to make a treaty with the men from Gibeon. He promised that the Israelites would not kill the Gibeonites. The Israelite leaders made the same promise to the men from Gibeon. **16**A whole day went by after Joshua and the Israelite leaders made this treaty with the men from Gibeon. On the day after that, the Israelites learned that they actually lived close by them. **17**So they travelled to see where the Gibeonites lived. They left Gilgal on one day, traveled for another whole day, and on the day after that arrived at the city of Gibeon and the surrounding towns of Kephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath Jearim. **18**But the Israelites still did not kill the Gibeonites {even after seeing that they lived nearby}. That was because their leaders had made a solemn vow by Yahweh their God promising them that they would not kill them. All the people of Israel grumbled against their leaders {for making this treaty}. **19**But all the leaders replied, “We made a solemn vow by Yahweh our God promising them {that we would not kill them}. So now we may not kill them. **20**What we must do to the Gibeonites is let them live. If we kill them, God will be angry with us {and punish us} because we did not keep our promise to them.” **21**Then the leaders announced this decision to all of the Israelites: “We must allow them to live.” But they also told the Israelites that they could make the Gibeonites slaves who would cut wood and get water for all of them. So the Israelites obeyed the instructions of their leaders. **22**Joshua summoned the men from Gibeon and said to them, “Tell me why you lied to us by saying that you live very far from here, when in fact you actually live nearby! **23**Because you did that, Yahweh has cursed you. You will always be our slaves. We will make you cut wood and carry water for the place where we worship our God.” **24**The Gibeonites answered, “We lied to you because we were very afraid that you would kill us. We had heard that your God Yahweh instructed his servant Moses to give you all this land and kill everyone who lives in it. **25**So now, you have control over us. Do to us what you think is the right thing to do.” **26**So Joshua saved the lives of the Gibeonites and did not permit the army of Israel to kill them. **27**But from that day on, Joshua forced the Gibeonites to become the Israelites’ slaves. They cut wood and carried water for the Israelites. They also cut wood and carried water for Yahweh’s altar, at whatever place he was going to choose {for them to build it}. They still cut wood and carry water at this present time.

Chapter 10

1This is what happened next. Adoni Zedek was the king who ruled the city of Jerusalem. He heard that Joshua’s army had captured the city of Ai and completely destroyed it, just as they had done to the city of Jericho and its king. He also heard that the people of the city of Gibeon had made a peace agreement with the Israelites and were living among them. **2**The people of Jerusalem and their king became very afraid, because the city of Gibeon was as large as the cities that had kings ruling them. It was larger than the city of Ai, and all its men were strong warriors.

3So Adoni Zedek, the king of Jerusalem, sent messages to several other kings. He sent them to Hoham, who ruled the city of Hebron, to Piram, who ruled the city of Jarmuth, to Japhia, who ruled the city of Lachish, and to Debir, who ruled the city of Eglon. **4**Adoni Zedek told them, “Come and help me attack the city of Gibeon because its people have made a peace agreement with Joshua and the Israelites.”

5So these five kings of the Amorites joined their armies together. These were the kings of the cities of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon. These kings and their armies went up with all their soldiers and surrounded the city of Gibeon and started to attack it.

6The men of Gibeon sent this message to Joshua at the camp at Gilgal: “Protect us, because we are your subjects. Come quickly and save us! Help us, because all the Amorite kings who live in the hill country have joined their armies together to attack us!”

7So Joshua marched up from Gilgal with his entire army, including his best fighting men. **8**Yahweh told Joshua, “Do not be afraid of those armies. I will enable you to defeat them. None of them will be able to resist you.”

9Joshua and his army marched all night from Gilgal and surprised the enemy armies. **10**Yahweh caused the enemy armies to become confused when they saw the Israelites. The Israelites won a great victory at Gibeon. They chased their enemies along the road that goes up to Beth Horon. They continued to kill enemy soldiers all the way to the cities of Azekah and Makkedah. **11**As the enemies were running away from the Israelites down the road from Beth Horon, Yahweh threw large hailstones on them from the sky. These hailstones continued to fall on them all the way to the city of Azekah. The hailstones killed more of the enemy soldiers than the Israelites killed with their swords.

12On that same day, when Yahweh was helping the Israelites defeat the Amorites, Joshua spoke to Yahweh. While the Israelites were watching, Joshua prayed, asking Yahweh to make the sun stay in place over the city of Gibeon and to make the moon stay in place over the Valley of Aijalon. **13**And the sun stayed in place, and the moon did not move, until the Israelites had defeated their enemies. There is an account of this in the Book of Jashar. The sun stopped moving, and it stayed in the middle of the sky and did not go down for about a whole day. **14**There has never been another day like that one, either before or after it, when Yahweh answered someone’s prayer in such an amazing way. Yahweh was truly fighting for the Israelites.

15Then Joshua and all of the Israelite soldiers returned to their camp at Gilgal.

16During the battle, the five kings ran away and hid in a cave near the city of Makkedah. **17**But Joshua’s soldiers discovered their hiding place and they told him that the five kings were hiding in a cave near Makkedah. **18**Joshua told his men, “Roll some large stones to block the entrance of the cave. Put some guards there to watch it.” **19**Then Joshua said to all the other soldiers, “Do not stay here in the camp. Chase after your enemies and attack those who have been the slowest to escape. Do not let them reach their cities. Yahweh your God will enable you to defeat them.”

20So Joshua and his soldiers chased and killed the Amorite soldiers until they had destroyed them almost completely. Only a few of them escaped to the safety of their cities, which had defensive walls. **21**Then the whole Israelite army returned to Joshua at the camp at Makkedah with no enemy soldiers pursuing them. No one in that region dared to say anything bad about any of the Israelites.

22Then Joshua said, “Remove the stones from the entrance of the cave and bring those five kings to me.” **23**So his soldiers brought out the five kings from the cave. They were the kings of the cities of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon. **24**When they brought these kings to Joshua, he called together the whole Israelite army. He said to the commanders who fought the battle with him, “Come here and put your feet on the necks of these kings.” So they came and put their feet on the kings’ necks {to show that they had completely defeated them and their armies}. **25**Then Joshua said to his commanders, “Yahweh will do the same thing to all the enemies whom you will fight. So you have no reason to be afraid of them. Fight very bravely!” **26**Then Joshua killed the five kings and hanged their bodies on five trees. He left their bodies hanging on the trees until evening. **27**At sunset, Joshua

ordered his men to take the bodies down from the trees and throw them into the cave where the kings had hidden. They put large stones at the entrance of the cave. Those stones are still there today.

28That same day, Joshua's army captured the city of Makkedah. They completely destroyed that city and its king. They also completely destroyed all of the people and animals in the city. They made sure no one survived. This is just what they had done to the city of Jericho.

29Then Joshua led the whole Israelite army from Makkedah to the city of Libnah and they attacked it. **30**Yahweh also helped the Israelites conquer this city and its king. The Israelite soldiers killed everyone in the city. They made sure no one survived. They treated the king of Libnah the same way they had treated the king of Jericho.

31Next, Joshua led the whole Israelite army from Libnah to the city of Lachish. They set up their camp near the city and began their attack. **32**After one day of fighting, Yahweh helped the Israelites conquer Lachish. They killed everyone in the city, just as they had done to Libnah. **33**During this time, King Horam of the city of Gezer brought his army to help Lachish. But Joshua's army defeated them and killed them all.

34Then Joshua led the whole Israelite army from Lachish to the city of Eglon. They set up their camp near the city and began their attack. **35**They captured Eglon that same day. They killed everyone in the city. They destroyed all the people, just as they had done in Lachish.

36After this, Joshua led the whole Israelite army up from Eglon to the city of Hebron, and they attacked it. **37**They captured the city and all the nearby towns. They killed everyone, including the king. They made sure no one survived, just as they had done in Eglon.

38Then Joshua and the whole Israelite army turned back and went to the city of Debir and attacked it. **39**They captured the city, its king, and all the nearby towns. They killed everyone. They made sure that. no person who lived in that area survived. They did the same things to Debir and its king that they had done to the cities of Hebron and Libnah and their kings.

40This is how Joshua conquered the whole region. He defeated all the kings and their people in the hill country, the southern desert, the western foothills, and the eastern slopes. He killed everyone in these places, as Yahweh, the God of Israel, had commanded. **41**Joshua's army defeated all the people living in the area from Kadesh Barnea to the city of Gaza, including the region of Goshen all the way to the city of Gibeon. **42**Joshua defeated all these kings and took control of their territories in a single campaign. He was able to do that because Yahweh, the God of Israel, was fighting for his people.

43After this, Joshua and the whole Israelite army returned to their camp at Gilgal.

Chapter 11

1When King Jabin of the city of Hazor learned what had happened, he sent messages to several other kings. He sent them to King Jobab of the city of Madon, to the king of the city of Shimron, and to the king of the city of Achshaph. **2**He also sent messages to the kings who ruled in the northern hill country and to the kings in the Jordan River Valley, south of the lake of Kinnereth; the kings in the low country, and the kings in the western foothills near the city of Dor. **3**He sent messages to the Canaanite peoples who lived on both the eastern and western sides of the Jordan River. He also sent them to the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, and Jebusites who lived in the hill country, and to the Hivites who lived near Mount Hermon in the region of Mizpah. **4**All these kings gathered their armies together to fight. Their soldiers were as numerous as the grains of sand on the seashore. They also brought a great number of horses and chariots with them. **5**All these kings joined their forces and set up their camp together near the lake of Merom, preparing to fight against the Israelites.

6Then Yahweh said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of these armies, because at about this time tomorrow, I will help you defeat all of them. When you attack them, you must cripple their horses and burn their chariots."

7So Joshua and his whole army traveled to the lake of Merom and made a surprise attack against their enemies.
8Yahweh helped the Israelites defeat them. The Israelite army pursued them all the way to the great city of Sidon in the north, to Misrephoth Maim, and to the Valley of Mizpah in the east. The Israelites kept fighting until they had killed all their enemies. **9**Then Joshua did exactly what Yahweh had told him to do. He crippled their horses and burned their chariots.

10After that, Joshua went back and captured the city of Hazor. He killed its king. Hazor was the main city that ruled all the kingdoms that had fought against Israel. **11**The Israelite army killed everyone in the city. They made sure that no person survived. Then they burned the city.

12Joshua's army captured all these cities and killed all their kings. They destroyed everything that was in the cities. They did exactly what Moses, Yahweh's servant, had commanded them to do. **13**The Israelites did not burn any of the cities that people had built on hills{, because they wanted to live in them}. But Joshua did burn the city of Hazor, even though it was on a hill. **14**The Israelites took for themselves all the valuable things and all the livestock from these cities. But they killed all the people. They did not let any of the people live. **15**Moses had passed on to Joshua everything that Yahweh had told him to do. And Joshua carried out all of these commands completely. He did exactly what Yahweh had ordered Moses to do.

16Joshua and his army took control of all these regions: the hill country, the southern desert, the whole region around Goshen, the western foothills, the Jordan River Valley, and the mountains of Israel with their foothills.
17They conquered all the land from Mount Halak which rises toward Seir and even as far as the town of Baal Gad in the Valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon. Joshua captured and killed all the kings of these areas. **18**Joshua and his army spent many years fighting against all these kings. **19**Only the people of the city of Gibeon, who were Hivites, agreed to become subjects of the Israelites. The Israelite army had to capture all the other cities by fighting. **20**Yahweh led the people in all these cities to want to fight against Israel so that the Israelites would destroy them completely without showing any mercy. This is what Yahweh had commanded Moses to do.

21During that time, Joshua's army went through all the hill country and killed all the descendants of Anak who lived there. They killed them in the cities of Hebron, Debir, and Anab and in every other place in the hills where the tribes of Judah and Israel lived. Joshua's army destroyed all these people and their cities. **22**No descendants of Anak remained alive in the land of Israel. The only ones who survived lived in the cities of Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod.
23Joshua took control of all the land, just as Yahweh had told Moses to do. Then Joshua gave the land to the Israelites. He assigned each tribe a part of the land that would belong to them. After this, none of the people groups who had been living in the land fought against the Israelites again.

Chapter 12

1While the Israelites were still on the east side of the Jordan River, they defeated the kings who ruled there, and they took their land. This land extended from the Arnon River gorge in the south to Mount Hermon in the north. It included all of the plain on the eastern side of the Jordan.

2{One king they defeated was} Sihon, the king of the Amorites. He lived in the city of Heshbon. He ruled the area {south of Heshbon} as far as the middle of the Arnon River gorge. So his land included the city of Aroer on the edge of that gorge. Sihon ruled the area {north of Heshbon} to the Jabbok River. That river was the boundary between his land and the land of the Ammonites. Sihon also ruled over half of the region of Gilead. **3**Sihon also ruled over the land on the eastern plain along the Jordan, from the Sea of Kinnereth south to the Sea of Salt. He also ruled over the land east of the Sea of Salt from Beth Jeshimoth south to Mount Pisgah.

4The other king whom the Israelite army defeated was Og, the king of the region of Bashan. He was the last of the descendants of the giant Raphaites. He lived in the cities of Ashtaroth and Edrei. **5**He ruled over the area from Mount Hermon and Salekah in the north, and over all Bashan in the east, and to the borders of the Geshurites and

Maacathites to the west. Og ruled over half of the region of Gilead, as far as the border of the land ruled by Sihon, king of Heshbon.

6Moses, Yahweh's servant, and the whole Israelite army had defeated the armies of those kings. Then Moses gave their land to the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh.

7Joshua and the Israelite army also defeated kings who ruled over the land on the west side of the Jordan River. That land was between Baal Gad in the valley near Lebanon to Mount Halak, which goes up to Seir. Joshua gave land to the tribes of Israel for them to possess, **8**This land included the hill country, the lowlands, the plain along the Jordan, the mountainsides, in the desert, and in the southern Judean wilderness. It had belonged to the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and the Jebusites. **9**The kings that the Israelites conquered were those of the following cities: Jericho, Ai (which was near Bethel), **10**Jerusalem, Hebron, **11**Jarmuth, Lachish, **12**Eglon, Gezer, **13**Debir, Geder, **14**Hormah, Arad, **15**Libnah, Adullam, **16**Makkedah, Bethel, **17**Tappuah, Hepher, **18**Aphek, Lasharon, **19**Madon, Hazor, **20**Shimron Meron, Akshaph, **21**Taanach, Megiddo, **22**Kedesh, Jokneam in the Carmel area, **23**Dor in the Naphoth Dor area, Goiim in the region of Gilgal, **24**and Tirzah.

There was a total of thirty-one kings that the Israelite army defeated.

Chapter 13

1When Joshua was very old, Yahweh said to him, "Joshua, you are now an old man, but there is still a lot of land for your army to capture. **2**Here is a list of the lands you must still capture: The Geshur region and all the area where the Philistines live. **3**Those go as far south as Shihor, the brook that forms a boundary with Egypt. They go as far north as the city of Ekron. Conquer this land as you have conquered the Canaanite lands. Capture the cities that the five rulers of the Philistines govern: Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron. Next, also conquer the land of the Avvites, **4**who live south of the Philistines and Geshurites. Next, you must also capture the rest of the regions where the Canaan people groups live. They extend from Arah, which belongs to the Sidonians, to Aphek, near the boundary with the Amorites. **5**Also conquer the land where the Gebalites live and all of Lebanon east of there, from the city of Baal Gad near Mount Hermon to Lebo Hamath.

6I will force the people to leave who live in the hill country from Lebanon to Misrephoth Maim, including all the people of the city of Sidon. That way you will be able to live there instead. Your job will be to give that area to the Israelite people when you divide the land among them. That is what I have ordered you to do. **7**Divide all that land among the nine tribes and the half tribe of Manasseh so that it will always belong to them."

8Moses had already assigned the rest of the tribe of Manasseh land where it could live. Moses, Yahweh's servant, had also already assigned land to the tribes of Reuben and Gad on the east side of the Jordan River. **9**Their lands went as far south as Aroer, which is on the edge of the Arnon River valley. They included the city that is located in the middle of the valley. They also included the whole plateau of Medeba, all the way to the city of Dibon. **10**These lands also included the cities that Sihon king of the Amorites had ruled. He had reigned in Heshbon. These lands went all the way to the border of the Ammonites. **11**They included Gilead and the region of the Geshurites and Maacathites, including all of Mount Hermon. They also included all of the region of Bashan as far as the city of Salekah. **12**They also included the whole kingdom of Og within the region of Bashan. He had reigned in the cities of Ashtaroth and Edrei. (Og was the last living descendant of the Rapahites.) Moses had attacked the people who had lived in all of these places, and he forced them to leave. **13**However, the Israelites did not force the Geshurites and Maacathites to leave. Instead, these people live with the Israelites even at the present time.

14But Moses did not give the Levites any assignment of land. They were the only tribe that received no land. Yahweh, the God of Israel, told them that the burnt offerings he received{, which provided their food.} would be their possession.

15This is the land that Moses assigned to all of the clans of the tribe of Reuben: **16**It went as far south as the city of Aroer on the edge of the Arnon River valley. It included the city that is in the middle of the valley. It also included

the region of the plateau near Medeba. **17**It also included Heshbon and all the cities that were in the plateau. These cities were Dibon, Bamoth Baal, Beth Baal Meon, **18**Jahaz, Kedemoth, Mephaath, **19**Kiriathaim, Sibmah, and Zereth Shahar, which stands on a hill within the valley. **20**Their territory also included Beth Peor, the slopes of Mount Pisgah, Beth Jeshimoth, **21**and all the cities situated along the plateau, and the whole kingdom of Sihon, king of the Amorites. He formerly reigned in the city of Heshbon. Moses defeated Sihon, and he also defeated the leaders of Midian. Their names were Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur and Reba. The Midianites lived within Sihon's kingdom, and these leaders served him as vassals. **22**When the Israelites used their swords to kill many of their enemies, they also killed Balaam son of Beor. He was a man who tried to use magic to tell the future. **23**The border of the people of the tribe of Reuben was the Jordan River. This was the land that Moses gave to the clans of the tribe of Reuben. They lived in the cities and villages there.

24Moses also gave land to the tribe of Gad. He gave each of the clans of the Gadites the land they would need to live on. **25**They lived near Jazer and in all the cities of Gilead. Their land included half of the land where the Ammonites had once lived {before King Sihon took it from them.} Their land went all the way to Aroer, which is a city east of Rabbah. **26**Their land extended from Heshbon to Ramath Mizpah and Betonim, all the way to Mahanaim and to the region of Debir. **27**Their land was also in the valley. It included the cities of Beth Haram, Beth Nimrah, Succoth, and Zaphon. This was the rest of the kingdom of Sihon, who had ruled from the city of Heshbon. His kingdom had bordered on the Jordan River and extended to the lower end of the Sea of Kinnereth, eastward beyond the Jordan River. **28**This is the land that Moses assigned to the clans of the tribe of Gad. They lived in the cities and villages there.

29Moses also gave land {on the east side of the Jordan River} to half of the tribe of Manasseh. Moses gave each clan of this half-tribe the land it would need to live on. **30**Their territory went as far as Mahanaim. It included the whole region of Bashan, the whole former kingdom of Og king of Bashan, and all the towns of Jair, which are in Bashan. There are sixty cities in that region. **31**Their land also included half of the region of Gilead, as well as the cities of Ashtaroth and Edrei. (People sometimes call those the royal cities of Og in Bashan). Moses gave these lands to the descendants of Machir son of Manasseh. The clans of about half of Machir's descendants lived there.

32These were the lands that Moses distributed to those Israelites on the plains of Moab, on the other side of the Jordan River, just east of Jericho. **33**But Moses gave no land to the tribe of Levi. Yahweh, the God of Israel, promised them that he would be their inheritance.

Chapter 14

1Here is a description of the areas where the Israelites settled in the land of Canaan. Eleazar the high priest, Joshua, and the family leaders of the Israelite tribes divided the land among them. **2**They decided what land to give to each of the remaining nine and one-half tribes by casting lots. Yahweh had told Moses to tell them to do it that way, and so they did. **3-4**Moses had given land as a permanent possession to two and a half tribes before Israel crossed over the Jordan River. Moses did not give any land to the tribe of Levi. (Rather than give them part of the land, Moses gave them cities to live in. He also gave them pastureland around those cities for their livestock so they could sustain their families.) Even so, there were nine and a half of the twelve Israelite tribes that still needed land, because the descendants of Joseph had become two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim. **5**The people of Israel did just what Yahweh commanded Moses. They gave out portions of the land as permanent possessions.

6Some men from the tribe of Judah went to Joshua while he and all the Israelites were at Gilgal. Among those men was Jephunneh's son Caleb. He said to Joshua, "I am sure that you remember what Yahweh said to the prophet Moses concerning you and me when we were at Kadesh Barnea. **7**I was 40 years old at that time. Moses sent me from Kadesh Barnea with you and some other men to explore this land. When we returned, I gave to Moses an accurate report about what we had seen. **8**The other Israelites who went with us gave a report that caused the people to be afraid. But I did everything that Yahweh my God wanted me to do. {I encouraged the people to conquer the land.} **9**That day Moses promised me, 'The land that you walked on will become yours as your

permanent possession. It will always belong to you and your descendants. I promise that it will be yours because you did everything that Yahweh, my God, wanted you to do.'

10Now Yahweh has done for me what he promised he would do. It has been 45 years since Moses made that promise to me during the time when we Israelites were still in the wilderness. But just as Yahweh promised, he has kept me alive and well all during that time. Look at me! I am now 85 years old. **11**But I am still as strong today as I was on the day that Moses sent me to explore this land. I have the same strength now that I had as a young man. I can still fight wars as a soldier or as a commander. **12**So please give me the hill country that Yahweh promised to give to me on that day long ago. At that time, you heard me say that the Anakim lived there. You heard me say that their cities were large and that they had walls around them to protect them. {And that is still true today.} But I hope that Yahweh will help me to force the people there to leave, just as Yahweh promised."

13Then Joshua asked God to bless Caleb the son of Jephunneh. Joshua gave Caleb the city of Hebron as his possession. **14**In this way, Hebron became the permanent possession and the home of Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite. To this day his descendants live there because Caleb did everything that Yahweh, the God of Israel, wanted him to do. **15**(Now people used to call Hebron Kiriath Arba. Arba had been a very famous Anakite.) No enemies were attacking the Israelites at this time{, so they were able to divide up the land peacefully}.

Chapter 15

1The Israelite leaders assigned land by lot to the clans of the tribe of Judah. In the south, their land extended to the wilderness of Zin at the border of Edom.

2Their southern border started at the bay of the Sea of Salt that turns toward the south. **3**From there, the border of the territory of Judah went southward and up the hill of Akrabbim. It continued along to Zin, and then it went up once more south of Kadesh Barnea, beside Hezron. It went up to Addar and then bent around to Karka. **4**From there it continued past Azmon, and from there it ran beside the brook of Egypt. From there, it turned west to the Great Sea. That was the southern border of the territory of the tribe of Judah. **5**Its eastern border was the Sea of Salt, up to where the Jordan River flows into it. Its northern border began at the bay of the Sea of Salt near where the Jordan River flows in. **6**The northern border continued from that point and went to Beth Hoglah. From there it went to the north of Beth Arabah until it reached the great stone that Bohan son of Reuben set up. **7**From that point, the border went through the Valley of Achor to Debir. From there it turned north again to go to Gilgal. Gilgal is north of the road that goes over the hill of Adummim, on the south side of the river valley. From Gilgal, the border extended west to the springs at En Shemesh until it reached En Rogel. **8**From that point, the border went along the south slope of the hill of the city of Jerusalem, where the Jebusites live. The boundary went to the top of the hill on the west side of the Valley of Hinnom, at the northern end of the Valley of Rephaim. **9**From there, the border extended northwest to the top of the hills leading to the spring of Nephtoah. From there, it went to the cities near Mount Ephron. From there, the border extended west toward Baalah. (People now call that city Kiriath Jearim.) **10**Then the border continued west past Baalah to Mount Seir. Then it went southwest along the north side of Mount Jearim. (People also call that Mount Chesalon.) The border then went down to Beth Shemesh, and from there it passed by Timnah. **11**The border continued northwest to the hill north of Ekron. From there, it extended west to Shikkeron and past Mount Baalah. It went on to Jabneel and then northwest to the Great Sea.

12The western border of the territory of the tribe of Judah was the Great Sea. All the clans of Judah lived inside those borders.

13Yahweh commanded Joshua to give part of the land of the tribe of Judah to Caleb. So Joshua gave Caleb a city that people called Kiriath Arba. They named it after Arba, the ancestor of the Anakites. But people now call that city Hebron. **14**Caleb forced the three clans of the Anak people group to leave Hebron. Those were the Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai clans. **15**Then Caleb left there and went to fight against the people who were living in Debir. (People used to call that city Kiriath Sepher). **16**Caleb said, "I need someone to lead the attack against Kiriath Sepher and conquer that city. I will allow the man who does that to marry my daughter Aksah." **17**Caleb had a

younger brother whose name was Kenaz. Kenaz had a son whose name was Othniel. Othniel commanded the soldiers who captured the city of Kiriath Sepher. So Caleb allowed Othniel to marry his daughter Achsah.

18Aksah came {to Kiriath Sepher} to marry Othniel. When she got there, she convinced Othniel to let her ask her father for some land they could farm. She {went to see her father and respectfully} got off the donkey she was riding. Caleb asked her, “What would you like me to do for you?”

19She replied, “Please do a favor for me. You have given {my husband and} me some land in an area where it is very dry. So please also give us some land that has springs on it.” So Caleb gave her some land on higher ground that had a spring and some land on lower ground that had a spring.

20Here is a list of the towns in the land that belonged to the clans of the tribe of Judah.

21The following cities that belonged to the tribe of Judah were in the southern wilderness, near the border of the region of Edom:

Kabzeel, Eder, Jagur, **22**Kinah, Dimonah, Adadah, **23**Kedesh, Hazor, Ithnan, **24**Ziph, Telem, and Bealoth, **25**Hazor Hadattah, Kerioth Hezron (people also call that city Hazor), **26**Amam, Shema, Molodah, **27**Hazar Gaddah, Heshmon, Beth Pelet, **28**Hazar Shual, Beersheba, Biziothiah, **29**Baalah, Iyim, Ezem, **30**Eltolad, Kesil, Hormah, **31**Ziklag, Madmannah, Sansannah, **32**Lebaoth, Shilhim, Ain, and Rimmon. There were these 29 cities in the southern part of the territory of Judah. The people of Judah lived in them and in their surrounding villages,

33The following cities were in the northern part of the western foothills within the territory of Judah: Eshtaol, Zorah, Ashnah,

34Zanoah, En Gannim, Tappuah, Enam, **35**Jarmuth, Adullam, Sokoh, Azekah, **36**Shaaraim, Adithaim, and Gederah. (People also call that city Gederothaim). These were the 14 cities in that area. The people of Judah lived in them and in their surrounding villages.

37The following cities were in the southern part of the western foothills within the territory of Judah: Zenan, Hadashah, Migdalgad, **38**Dilean, Mizpah, Joktheel, **39**Lachish, Bozkath, Eglon, **40**Kabbon, Lahmas, Kitlish, **41**Gederoth, Bethdagon, Naamah, and Makkedah.

These were the 16 cities in that area. The people of Judah lived in them and in their surrounding villages.

42The following cities were in the central part of the western foothills within the territory of Judah: Libnah, Ether, Ashan, **43**Iphtah, Ashnah, Nezib, **44**Keilah, Aczib, and Mareshah. These were the nine cities in that area. The people of Judah lived in them and in their surrounding villages.

45Judah’s territory also included the city of Ekron and its surrounding towns and villages. **46**From Ekron to the Great Sea, Judah’s territory also included all the settlements near the city of Ashdod, including their villages.

47Judah’s territory also included the city of Ashdod itself. and its surrounding towns and villages. It also included the city of Gaza and its surrounding towns and villages. It included all of the land down to the brook of Egypt and to the Great Sea. The border followed the coastline.

48The following cities were in the southwestern part of the hill country within the territory of Judah: Shamir, Jattir, Sokoh, **49**Dannah, Kiriath Sannah (people also call that city Debir), **50**Anab, Eshtemoh, Anim, **51**Goshen, Holon, and Giloh. These were the 11 cities in that area. The people of Judah lived in them and in their surrounding villages.

52The following cities were in the south central part of the hill country within the territory of Judah: Arab, Dumah, Eshan, **53**Janim, Beth Tappuah, Aphekah, **54**Humtah, Kiriath Arba (now called Hebron), and Zior. These were the nine cities in that area. The people of Judah lived in them and in their surrounding villages.

55The following cities were in the southeastern part of the hill country within the territory of Judah: Maon, Carmel, Ziph, Juttah, **56**Jezreel, Jokdeam, Zanoah, **57**Kain, Gibeah, and Timnah. These were the ten cities in that area. The people of Judah lived in them and in their surrounding villages.

58The following cities were in the central part of the hill country within the territory of Judah: Halhul, Beth Zur, Gedor, **59**Maarath, Beth Anoth, and Eltekon. These were the six cities in that area. The people of Judah lived in them and in their surrounding villages.

60The following two cities and their villages were in the northern part of the hill country within the territory of Judah: Rabbah and Kiriath Baal. (People also call that city Kiriath Jearim).

61The following cities were in the desert near the Sea of Salt within the territory of Judah: Beth Arabah, Middin, Secacah, **62**Nibshan, the City of Salt, and En Gedi. These were the six cities in that area. The people of Judah lived in them and in their surrounding villages.

63However, the army of the tribe of Judah was not able to force the Jebusites who were living Jerusalem to leave. So the Jebusites are still living among the people of Judah in Jerusalem today.

Chapter 16

1The Israelite leaders assigned land to the two tribes that were descendants of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh. The southern border of this land started at the city of Jericho by the Jordan River. It went through the springs east of Jericho and up into the desolate area in the hill country around the city of Bethel. **2**From Bethel it went to the city of Luz and then to the city of Ataroth. That city was in the territory where the Arkite people group lived. **3**From there it extended west to the edge of the land where the Japhletite people group lived. It then went farther west to the area near the city of Lower Beth Horon. From there it continued west to the city of Gezer and from there to the Great Sea. **4**That was the territory that the descendants of Joseph, the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim, received as their permanent possession. **5**The border of the land that the leaders assigned to the clans of the tribe of Ephraim started at the town of Ataroth Addar. From there, it went west to Upper Beth Horon. **6**From there it headed west and went north of the town of Mikmethath. Then it turned eastward toward the town of Taanath Shiloh and went east of the town of Janoah. **7**Then it continued from Janoah to the towns of Ataroth and Naarah. From there it went to the city of Jericho, and it ended at the Jordan River. **8**The northern border extended west from the town of Tappuah to the valley of Kanah and from there to the Great Sea. This was the land that the Israelite leaders assigned to all the clans of the tribe of Ephraim. **9**The leaders assigned some cities and their dependent villages to the people of Ephraim that were actually within the territory of the tribe of Manasseh. Those cities were part of their total territory.

10The people of the tribe of Ephraim could not force the Canaanites who were living in Gezer to leave. So those Canaanites still live there. However, the people of Ephraim did force them to become their slaves.

Chapter 17

1This is a description of the land that the Israelite leaders gave to the tribe of Manasseh, the descendants of the oldest son of Joseph. Manasseh's oldest son was Machir, and his grandson was Gilead. Their descendants were great soldiers, so Moses gave them land that they conquered in the regions of Gilead and Bashan. **2**The Israelite leaders gave land on the west side of the Jordan River to the other clans that were descendants of Manasseh. The were the clans of Abiezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem, Hepher, and Shemida. Manasseh was a son of Joseph, and those were the names of his male descendants.

3There was a man whose name was Zelophehad. His father was Hepher, his grandfather was Gilead, his great-grandfather was Machir, and his great-great-grandfather was Manasseh. Zelphehad had no sons. He only had

daughters. Their names were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milkah, and Tirzah. **4**These women went to speak with Eleazar the high priest, to Joshua, and to the other Israelite leaders. They told them, “We want you to give us some land just as you have given to the men in our tribe. Yahweh told Moses that he should give to us some land.” So Eleazar did what Yahweh had commanded. He gave some land to the daughters of Zelophehad, just as he had done for their uncles. **5**So the tribe of Manasseh eventually had ten sections of land west of the Jordan River and two sections on the east side of the Jordan River in Gilead and Bashan. **6**That was because the Israelite leaders gave land on the west side of the Jordan River to these female descendants of Manasseh, just as they had given to his male descendants The leaders had also given land in the region of Gilead to other descendants of Manasseh.

7The land that the leaders gave to the tribe of Manasseh was between the land where the tribe of Asher lives and the town of Mikmethath, which is near the city of Shechem. The border of this land extended south to the spring of Tappuah. **8**The land near the city of Tappuah belonged to the tribe of Manasseh. But Tappuah itself was on the border with the tribe of Ephraim, and in fact it belonged to the Ephraimites. **9**The border extended south to the brook of Kanah. All the cities south of that stream belonged to the tribe of Ephraim. The border of Manasseh was on the north side of the brook of Kanah. It extended to the Great Sea. **10**The land to the south belonged to the tribe of Ephraim, and the land to the north belonged to the tribe of Manasseh. The Great Sea was Manasseh’s border. The tribe of Asher was on the north side of the boundary, while the tribe of Issachar was to the east.

11But there were cities inside the territory of the tribes of Issachar and Asher that belonged to people from the tribe of Manasseh. So did the towns around these cities. These cities were Beth Shan, Ibleam, Dor, Endor, Taanach, and Megiddo. Those last three cities are in the hilly area around the city of Dor.

12The men of the tribe of Manasseh were not able to force the people who lived in those cities to leave. The Canaanite people resisted them and continued to live in their land. **13**When the people of Israel became strong enough, they forced those Canaanites to work for them as slaves. But they were not able to take their land away from them.

14Some representatives of the descendants of Joseph (that is, of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh) came to speak with Joshua. They told him, “Yahweh has blessed us by giving us many children. So you should have given us more than one small portion of land to live on.”

15Joshua replied to them, “As you say, there is probably not enough room for you in the hill country we have assigned you. But since you do have a lot of people, you can also occupy the land where the Perizzites and the Raphaites now live. You can go up to that forest area and cut down trees to clear fields where you can plant your crops.”

16The representatives of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh answered, “The hill country is not big enough for us. But we cannot spread out into the plain because of the Canaanites who live there. The Canaanites in Beth Shan and the surrounding towns have chariots that have iron parts.”

17Joshua replied further to these representatives of the descendants of Joseph, that is, of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. He told them, “Your people are indeed very numerous and very powerful. So I will give you some more land. **18**The hill country will also belong to you. You will have to cut down the trees in order to clear fields where you can plant crops. But all of that land will belong to you. I also believe that you will be able to force the Canaanites to leave the plain so you can live there. You will be able to do that even though they are strong and have chariots that have iron parts.”

Chapter 18

1Since no people groups were fighting against the Israelites any longer, they were able to meet together. They gathered at the city of Shiloh, and there they set up the tent where they worshiped Yahweh. **2**Now seven of the Israelite tribes had not yet occupied any land. **3**Joshua said to the people of those seven tribes, “Yahweh, the God

whom your ancestors worshiped, has promised to give to you land. So you should not delay going into that land and occupying it.

4Choose three men from each of your seven tribes. I will send them out to explore the parts of the land that no tribe has occupied yet. They are to write a description of seven different regions that will become the territories of your seven tribes. Then they are to bring the description back to me. **5**They will divide the remaining land into seven parts. The tribe of Judah will keep its land in the south, and the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh will keep their land in the north. **6**But in their report, the men from the seven tribes should describe how we can divide the remaining land into seven parts. They will bring the report to me. Then, while Yahweh our God is watching, I will cast lots to decide which part should be assigned to each tribe. **7**But I will not assign any land to the tribe of Levi. Instead, their reward is to be Yahweh's priests. And the tribes of Gad and Reuben and half of the tribe of Manasseh have already received land on the east side of the Jordan River. Moses, Yahweh's servant, gave it to them."

8When the men the tribes had chosen got ready to leave, Joshua told them, "Go and explore the land. Then write a report of what you have seen and bring it back to me. Then, while Yahweh is watching, I will cast lots here at Shiloh to determine what area each tribe will receive." **9**So the men left and walked through the land that no tribe had yet occupied. Then they described in a scroll each of the seven parts into which they would divide the land. They listed the cities in each part of the land. Then they returned to Joshua, who was still at Shiloh. **10**{Joshua read their report. Then,} while Yahweh was watching, he cast lots at Shiloh to decide which parts of the land would belong to each of the seven Israelite tribes.

11The lot selected the clans of the tribe of Benjamin to receive the first part of the land. This part was between the territory of the tribe of Judah and the territory of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.

12Its northern border started at the Jordan River and extended west, along the northern side of Jericho, into the hill country. From there the border extended farther west to the wilderness near Beth Aven. **13**From there it extended to Luz and went south of that ciity. (People now call that city Bethel). From there it went down to Ataroth Addar, which is on the hill south of Lower Beth Horon.

14Then, from the hill opposite the south side of the city of Beth Horon, the western side of the border turned and extended south to Kiriath Baal. (People now call that town Kiriath Jearim. People from the tribe of Judah live there.) That was the western border.

15The southern border of their land started near Kiriath Jearim and extended west to the springs of Nephtoah. **16**From there, it extended down to the bottom of the hill near the Valley of Ben Hinnom, on the north side of the Valley of the Raphaites. The border then extended down along the Hinnom Valley, south of the city where the Jebusites lived, to En Rogel. **17**From there the border went north to En Shemesh and continued to Geliloth near the hill of Adummim. Then it extended to the big stone that Reuben's son Bohan set up. **18**From there the border extended to the northern edge of Beth Arabah and down into the plain along the Jordan. **19**From there, it extended east to the northern edge of Beth Hoglah and ended at the north end of the Sea of Salt, where the Jordan River flows into that sea. That was the boundary on the south.

20The Jordan River was the eastern boundary. These were the borders all round the territory of the clans of the tribe of Benjamin.

21In the eastern part of their territory, the clans of the tribe of Benjamin lived in these cities: Jericho, Beth Hoglah, Emek Keziz, **22**Beth Arabah, Zemaraim, Bethel, **23**Avvim, Parah, Ophrah, **24**Kephar Ammoni, Ophni, and Geba. The people of Benjamin lived in these 12 cities and their villages.

25In the western part of their territory, the people of Benjamin lived in these cities: Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth, **26**Mizpah, Kephirah, Mozah, **27**Rekem, Irpeel, Taralah, **28**Zelah, Haeleph, Jebus (the city where the Jebusites lived, which people now call Jerusalem), Gibeah, and Kiriath. The people of Benjamin lived in these 14 cities and their villages. The clans of the tribe of Benjamin received this land and these cities as a permanent possession.

Chapter 19

[1]Then Joshua threw the lot again, and this time it selected the clans of the tribe of Simeon to receive the second part of the land. The land Joshua gave them was in the middle of Judah's territory.

[2]Simeon's territory included the following cities: Beer Sheba, Sheba, Moladah, [3]Hazar Shual, Balah, Ezem, [4]Eltolad, Bethul, and Hormah. [5]Simeon's land also included the cities of Ziklag, Beth Markaboth. Hazarsusah, [6]Beth Lebaoth, and Sharuhen. There were 13 cities, together with their surrounding villages.

[7]The land that Joshua assigned to the tribe of Simeon also included the four cities of Ain, Rimmon, Ether, and Ashan and their surrounding villages. [8]It also included some villages in an area that extended south to Baalath Beer. (People also call that city Ramah of the Negev.) This was the land that Joshua assigned to the clans of the tribe of Simeon.

[9]The leaders of Israel had assigned more land to the tribe of Judah than it needed, so they gave part of that land to the tribe of Simeon.

[10]Then Joshua threw the lot again, and this time it selected the clans of the tribe of Zebulun to receive the third part of the land.

Its southern border started at Sarid. [11]It extended west to Maralah and on to Dabbesheth, and then it extended to the brook in front of the city of Jokneam. [12]The border turned to the east from Sarid and went to the area near Chisloth Tabor. Then it went on to Daberath and farther on to Japhia. [13]From there, it extended east to Gath Hepher and Eth Kazin and north to Rimmon. From there, the border turned toward Neah. [14]From Neah, the border extended south to Hannathon, and from there it went to the Valley of Iphtah El. [15]Zebulun's territory included the cities of Kattath, Nahalal, Shimron, Idalah, and Bethlehem. Altogether there were 12 cities, together with their surrounding villages.

[16]That was the land that Joshua allotted to the clans of the tribe of Zebulun, including the cities and their surrounding villages.

[17]Then Joshua threw the lot again, and this time it selected the clans of the tribe of Issachar to receive the fourth part of the land. [18]Their land included the cities of Jezreel, Kesulloth, Shunem, [19]Hapharaim, Shion, and Anaharath. [20]Issachar's land also included the cities of Rabbith, Kishion, Ebez, [21]Remeth, En Gannim, En Haddah, and Beth Pazzez. [22]The border of Issachar's territory was close to the cities of Tabor, Shahazumah, and Beth Shemesh. It ended in the east at the Jordan River. Altogether there were 16 cities, together with their surrounding villages.

[23]Those were the cities and surrounding villages in the land that Joshua assigned to the clans of the tribe of Issachar.

[24]Then Joshua threw the lot again, and this time it selected the clans of the tribe of Asher to receive the fifth part of the land.

[25]Their land included the cities of Helkath, Hali, Beten, Akshaph, [26]Allammelek, Amad, and Mishal. The western border started at Mount Carmel and Shihor Libnath. [27]From there it extended southeast to the city of Beth Dagon until it reached the territory of tribe of Zebulun at the Valley of Iphtah El. From there, the border extended north to Beth Emek and Neiel and Cabul. [28]From there, it extended west to the cities of Abdon, Rehob, Hammon, and Kanah and then continued to Great Sidon. [29]From Sidon, the border extended south toward Ramah and to the city of Tyre, which had strong walls around it. From there, the border extended west to Hosah. It ended at the Great Sea, in the region of Aczib. [30]The territory of Asher included the cities of Ummah, Aphek, and Rehob. Altogether there were 22 cities, together with their surrounding villages.

[31]Those cities and their villages were within the land that Joshua assigned to the clans of the tribe of Asher.

32Then Joshua threw the lot again, and this time it selected the clans of the tribe of Naphtali to receive the sixth part of the land.

33The border of Naphtali's land started in the west at the huge oak tree at Zaanannim, near the city of Heleph. It extended east through Adami Nekeb and Jabneel. It then went to Lakkum, and it ended at the Jordan River. **34**The western boundary extended through Aznoth Tabor as far as Hukkok. It extended to the borders of the tribe of Zebulun at the south, to the border of the tribe of Asher on the west, and to the border of the tribe of Judah at the Jordan River to the east. **35**Within Naphtali's territory, there were many cities that had strong walls around them. These cities were Ziddim, Zer, Hammath, Rakkath, Kinnereth, **36**Adamah, Ramah, Hazor, **37**Kedesh, Edrei, and En Hazor. **38**Naphtali's cities with strong walls also included Yiron, Migdal El, Horem, Beth Anath, and Beth Shemesh. Altogether there were 19 cities, together with their surrounding villages.

39Those cities and surrounding villages were in the land that Joshua assigned to the clans of the tribe of Naphtali.

40Then Joshua threw the lot again, and this time it selected the clans of the tribe of Dan to receive the seventh part of the land. **41**Their land included the cities of Zorah, Eshtaol, Ir Shemesh, **42**Shaalabbin, Aijalon, and Ithlah. **43**Dan's land also included the cities of Elon, Timnah, Ekron, **44**Eltekeh, Gibbethon, Baalath, **45**Jehud, Beneberak, Gath Rimmon, **46**Me Jarkon, Rakkon, and the area near Joppa.

47But the people of the tribe of Dan were not able to take control of the whole land that Joshua assigned to them. So they went northeast and fought against the people who lived in in the city of Leshem. They defeated and killed all those people. Then they settled in that city. They changed its name to Leshem Dan. Dan was the name of the ancestor of their tribe.

48All of those cities and surrounding villages were in the land that Joshua assigned to the clans in the tribe of Dan.

49After the Israelite leaders had divided the land among the tribes, they also assigned some land to Joshua. **50**They gave him the city of Timnath Serah to live in. Yahweh had said that he could have whatever city he wanted, and that was the city he chose. It was in the hill country in the territory of the tribe of Ephraim. Joshua repaired the city and lived there.

51Those were the areas that the Israelite leaders assigned to the various tribes. The high priest Eleazar, Joshua son of Nun, and the leaders of each tribe divided up the land while they were all at Shiloh. They cast lots to decide which area each tribe would receive. They did that at the entrance of the sacred tent while Yahweh was watching. In that way they completed dividing up the land.

Chapter 20

1Then Yahweh said to Joshua, **2**"Tell the Israelite people that they should choose some cities to which people can flee in order to be safe, as I told Moses that you should do. **3**If someone kills another person accidentally, without intending to kill that person, then he can run to one of these cities and be safe.

4When that person arrives at the gate of one of those cities, he must stop there and tell the leaders of the city what happened. {If they believe him,} they must allow him to enter the city, and they must give him a place to live among them. **5**Suppose some relative of the dead person comes to that city to try to take revenge by killing the person who fled. The leaders of that city must not allow the relative to take him away and kill him, because what happened was accidental. He did not hate that person in the past. **6**The person who killed someone must stay in the city where he fled until it holds a trial to decide his case. {If they determine that the killing was accidental,} he must still stay there until the current high priest dies. Then the man may return safely to his own home."

7So the Israelites chose several cities where people could flee to be safe. They chose Kedesh in the region of Galilee, in the hill country where the tribe of Naphtali lived. They chose Shechem, in the hill country where the tribe of Ephraim lived. And they chose Kiriath Arba in the hill country where the tribe of Judah lived. (People now call that

city Hebron.) **8**They also chose some cities on the other side of the Jordan River, east of Jericho. They chose Bezer, on elevated land in the wilderness where the tribe of Reuben lived. They chose Ramoth in the region of Gilead, in the land where the tribe of Gad lived. And they chose Golan in the region of Bashan, where the tribe of Manasseh lived. **9**Any Israelite or any foreigner who lived among them who had killed someone accidentally was allowed to flee to one of those cities. There he would be safe from any relative of the dead person who wanted to come and kill him in revenge. He could stay in that city until the people there held a trial to decide whether he was telling the truth when he said that he did not kill that person on purpose.

Chapter 21

1The family leaders of the Levite clans came to Shiloh to speak with Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the family leaders of the Israelite tribes. **2**There in Shiloh, west of the Jordan River, they said to them, “Yahweh told Moses that you should give us cities where we can live and where our animals can graze.” **3**So the Israelites obeyed this command from Yahweh. They gave some cities and the surrounding fields to the tribe of Levi out of their own lands that their leaders had assigned to them.

4First, the Israelite leaders cast lots to assign some cities to the Levites from the clan of Kohath who were priests because they were descendants of Aaron. The leaders assigned 13 cities to them within the territories of the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin. **5**To the other Levites from the clan of Kohath, the Israelite leaders assigned ten cities within the territories of the tribes of Ephraim, Dan, and the part of the tribe of Manasseh that lived on the west side of the Jordan River.

6To the Levites from the clan of Gershon, the Israelite leaders assigned 13 cities within the territories of the tribes of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and the half tribe of Manasseh in the region of Bashan.

7To the Levites from the clan of Merari, the Israelite leaders assigned 12 cities within the territories of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun.

8In this way, the Israelite leaders assigned these cities and the surrounding fields to the people of the tribe of Levi. That was just what Yahweh had told Moses they should do.

9These are the names of the cities that the Israelite leaders assigned to the tribe of Levi within the territory of the tribes of Judah and Simeon.

10First, the Israelite leaders assigned cities by lot to the descendants of Aaron. They belonged to the Kohathite clan of the tribe of Levi.

11The Israelite leaders assigned Kiriath Arba to them in the hill country of Judah. They also gave the pasturelands around the city. (That city got its name from Arba, the ancestor of the Anak people group. But people now call that city Hebron.) **12**However, the Israelite leaders had already assigned the cultivated fields and villages surrounding Kiriath Arba to Caleb son of Jephunneh.

13In this way, the Israelite leaders assigned Hebron and its surrounding fiels to the descendants of Aaron the priest. Hebron was one of the cities to which people could flee if they accidentally killed a person. The leaders also gave Aaron’s descendants the city of Libnah with its surrounding fields, **14**Jattir with its surrounding fields, and Eshtemoa with its surrounding fields, **15**They also gave Holon with its surrounding fields, and Debir with its surrounding fields, **16**and Ain, Juttah, and Beth Shemesh. In total, the leaders gave them nine cities with their surrounding fields. These cities were within the territory of the tribes of Judah and Simeon.

17The Israelite leaders also gave the descendants of Aaron some cities, with the surrounding fields, in the area that the tribe of Benjamin possessed: Gibeon, Geba, **18**Anathoth, and Almon, four cities with their surrounding fields.

19Altogether, the Israelite leaders assigned 13 cities with their surrounding fields to the Levites who were priests because they were descendants of Aaron.

20The other Levite clans who were descendants of Kohath received four cities within the territory of the tribe of Ephraim.

21The leaders gave them Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim along with its surrounding fields. It was a city to which someone could flee for safety who killed a person unintentionally. The leaders also gave them Gezer with its surrounding fields, **22**Kibzaim, and Beth Horon, four cities. all with their surrounding fields.

23These clans that were descendants of Kohath also received four cities with their surrounding fields within the territory of the tribe of Dan. These cities were Eltekeh, Gibbethon, **24**Aijalon, and Gath Rimmon, four cities, all with their surrounding fields.

25These clans that were descendants of Kohath also received cities within the territory of the half of the tribe of Manasseh that had settled on the west side of the Jordan River. These cities were Taanach and Gath Rimmon, two cities with their surrounding fields.

26There were ten cities in all, together with their surrounding fields, that these other clans that were descendants of Kohath received.

27The Israelite leaders also cast lots in order to assign cities and their surrounding fields to the Levite clans of the descendants of Gershon.

These clans received two cities within the territory of the half of the tribe of Manasseh that had settled on the east side of the Jordan River. One of those cities was Golan in the region of Bashan. It was one of the cities to which someone could flee for safety who killed a person unintentionally. The other city was Beeshtarah. That made two cities, with their surrounding fields.

28These clans also received some cities and the surrounding fields within the territory of the tribe of Issachar. Those cities were Kishion, Daberath, **29**Jarmuth, and En Gannim, four cities, all with their surrounding fields.

30These clans also received some cities and the surrounding fields within the territory of the tribe of Asher. These cities were Mishal, Abdon, **31**Helkath, and Rehob, four cities, all with their surrounding fields.

32These clans also received some cities within the territory of the tribe of Naphtali. One of these cities was Kedesh in the region of Galilee. It was one of the cities to which people could flee for safety if they killed a person unintentionally. The other cities were Hammoth Dor and Kartan. That made three cities, all with their surrounding fields.

33Altogether, therefore, the Gershonite clans received 13 cities, together with their surrounding fields.

34The Israelite leaders also assigned cities to the last group of Levites, those who belonged to the clans that were descendants of Merari.

These clans received some cities, with the surrounding fields, within the territory of the tribe of Zebulun. These cities were Jokneam, Kartah, **35**Dimnah, and Nahalal, four cities, all with their surrounding fields.

36These clans also received cities, with their surrounding fields, within the territory of the tribe of Reuben. These cities were Bezer, Jahaz, **37**Kedemoth, and Mephaath, four cities, all with their surrounding fields.

38These clans also received cities, with their surrounding fields, within the territory of the tribe of Gad. One of these cities was Ramoth, which was one of the cities in Gilead to which people could flee for safety if they killed a person unintentionally. Another city was Mahanaim. **39**There were also the cities of Heshbon, and Jazer. That made four cities in all, together with their surrounding fields.

40In all, this last group of Levite clans, the ones that were descendants of Merari, received 12 cities when the Israelite leaders cast lots for them.

41So altogether, the Levites received 48 cities within the territories of the other tribes of Israel. They also received the fields around those cities. **42**Yes, for each one of these cities, the Levites also received the surrounding fields. That was true for all of them.

43Yahweh had promised the ancestors of the Israelites that he would give them all this land, and this was how he did that. The Israelite people took control of these areas and settled down in them. **44**Yahweh had also told the ancestors of the Israelites that they would be able to live peacefully in the land, and he made that happen too. None of their enemies were able to fight against them and defeat them. Instead, Yahweh helped Israel defeat all their enemies. **45**Yahweh kept every promise he made to the Israelites. Every promise came true.

Chapter 22

1Joshua then summoned the leaders of the Reubenites, Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh. **2**He told them, "You have done everything that Moses the servant of Yahweh, commanded you to do. You have also done what I commanded you to do. **3**For a long time you have helped the other tribes to defeat their enemies. You have obeyed everything that Yahweh your God taught you and commanded you to do. **4**He promised to settle your fellow Israelites peacefully in this land, and he has done what he promised. So now you may go back to your homes in the land that Moses gave to you on the east side of the Jordan River. **5**But now you must be careful to do what Moses commanded and taught you to do. You must love Yahweh your God and live your life as he wants you to live. You must obey his commands and be loyal only to him. Do this as you worship him and serve him by everything that you think and everything that you do." **6**Then Joshua wished for Yahweh to do good things for them, and he sent them back to their homes. **7**The people Joshua sent back to the east side of the Jordan River included half of the tribe of Manasseh. Moses had given them the region of Bashan there. Joshua had given the other half of that tribe land on the west side of the Jordan River with the other Israelites. When Joshua sent them away to their homes, he wished for Yahweh to do good things for them too. **8**He said to them, "You may take back to your homes much money, many animals, and silver, gold, bronze, iron, and very many beautiful clothes. You got these things from your enemies when you defeated them. Share them with the people of your tribes back home." **9**So the people of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh left the other people of Israel at Shiloh in the region of Canaan. They returned home to the region of Gilead, which belonged to them because they had conquered it when Moses told them that Yahweh had said they could do that. **10**They arrived at the western bank of the Jordan River, still in the land of Canaan. There the people of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh built an altar. It was a very large and impressive altar. **11**People from that area began to report to the other Israelites, "The people of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh have built an altar at the entrance to the land of Canaan. It is on the banks of the Jordan River, on the western side where most of the Israelites live." **12**When the other Israelites heard this, they all met together at the city of Shiloh. They decided they would fight against those tribes {to make them tear down that altar}. **13**But first, the Israelites sent Phinehas son of Eleazar, who was the leader of all the priests, across the river to talk with the people of Reuben, Gad, and eastern Manasseh. **14**They also sent one leader from each of the ten tribes of Israel {that had settled west of the Jordan River}. Each of those men was an important person within his own clan. **15**Those leaders went to the region of Gilead to talk with the people of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh. They said, **16**"All the other Israelites want to know why you have been so disloyal to the God whom we Israelites worship! {He commanded that there should only be one altar, at his sacred tent.} But you have now disobeyed Yahweh by building your own altar here in this place. You have rebelled against Yahweh! **17**You are acting as if we did not disobey Yahweh badly enough at Mount Peor{, where we worshiped a false god}. We still feel very ashamed for doing that. As a punishment, Yahweh sent a deadly sickness among the Israelites, and many of them died from it. **18**So you should not disobey Yahweh like this! If you rebel against Yahweh like this now, soon he will severely punish all of the Israelites. **19**{You seem to think you need your own altar, but you have built it on our side of the Jordan River.} If {you built it there because you think} your land is ritually impure, move back to the land that belongs to Yahweh, where Yahweh's sacred tent is. We will share our land with you. But do not rebel against Yahweh or against us by building yourselves an altar other than the one at the sacred tent. **20**Recall how Achan son of Zerah was so disloyal to Yahweh and kept some things from Jericho even though we were supposed to destroy everything there. This made Yahweh angry with all of us Israelites. Because of what that one man did wrong, many

other Israelites died.” **21**The leaders of the tribes of Reuben and Gad and of the half tribe of Manasseh replied to the Israelite clan leaders, **22**“We affirm that Yahweh is the only true God! He knows why we built this altar, and we want all the Israelites to know why as well. If we have broken our promise to obey Yahweh, punish us by killing us right now! **23**If we have disobeyed Yahweh’s command by building ourselves an altar other than the one at the sacred tent, or if we have built this altar so we can offer sacrifices, grain offerings, or sacrifices to promise friendship with him, in violation of the law, Yahweh will find out what we have done and punish us. **24**But that is not why we built this altar. We built it because we were afraid that your descendants might speak to our descendants at some future time and tell them that they had no right to worship Yahweh, the God whom Israelites worship. **25**We were afraid that they would tell our descendants that Yahweh had made the Jordan River a boundary between themselves and the people of the tribes of Reuben and Gad {and half of Manasseh}. We were afraid that your descendants would tell our descendants that they had nothing to do with Yahweh. And then they might try to stop our descendants from worshiping Yahweh. **26**So we decided that we should build an altar, but not for burning sacrifices or making offerings. **27**Instead, we wanted it to be a monument to prove to you, to ourselves, and to all of our descendants after us that we will truly worship Yahweh. We will indeed worship him by bringing to his sacred tent our sacrifices to burn and our other sacrifices and the other offerings we make to promise friendship with him. We built this altar so your descendants would never say to our descendants in the future that they had nothing to do with Yahweh. **28**In the future, if your descendants said that, then our descendants could tell them to look at the altar that we, their ancestors, had made. They would see that it was exactly like the altar at Yahweh’s sacred tent. Our descendants would tell them that they do not burn sacrifices on it, but it is a monument that proves that Israelites on both sides of the Jordan River worship Yahweh. **29**We certainly do not want to rebel against Yahweh or disobey him. We never intended to use this altar for burning sacrifices, making flour offerings, or making any other sacrifices. We know that there is only one true altar for Yahweh our God, and that is the one in front of the sacred tent.” **30**When Phinehas the priest and the clan leaders whom the Israelites had chosen when they met together heard what the people of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh had said, they were pleased. **31**And Phinehas said to them, “Now we recognize that Yahweh is helping all of us Israelites. We understand that you were not being disloyal to him when you built that altar. Because you have not disobeyed Yahweh, we are sure that he will not punish us.” **32**Then Phinehas son of Eliazar, the high priest, and the Israelite leaders who had accompanied him left the people of the tribes of Reuben and Gad. They returned from the region of Gilead to Canaan, where the other Israelites were. There they told them what had happened. **33**They were all pleased, and they thanked God. They did not talk anymore about fighting against the people of the tribes of Reuben and Gad {and half of Manasseh} to destroy them in the land where they lived. **34**The other Israelites no longer planned to attack the people of the tribes of Reuben and Gad {and Manasseh} because they had explained that the altar was a monument that proved to the eastern tribes that the western tribes also worshiped Yahweh as their God.

Chapter 23

1A long time later, once Yahweh had enabled the Israelites to live peacefully, with none of the surrounding nations threatening them, Joshua had become very old. **2**Joshua then called for all of Israel’s elders, leaders, judges, and officials to come and listen to him. When they arrived, he told them, “I am now very old. **3**You have seen how, for your sake, Yahweh defeated all of these enemy people groups. Yahweh our God has fought for us. **4**I am telling you now that you will be able to defeat the nations that still remain. Their lands will also become the permanent possession of your tribes. You will have all of the land from the Jordan River {in the east} to the Great Sea in the west, including the land of the nations I defeated when I was commanding the Israelite army. **5**Yahweh your God will enable you to defeat them, and he will force those people to leave their lands. Then you will be able to live there, just as he promised you would. **6**But you must be very careful to obey everything that Moses wrote in the book of the law. Do not disobey anything that he wrote. **7**Do not make friends with any of the people groups that are still in this land. Do not pray to their gods, and do not make oaths using the names of their gods. Do not worship those gods, and do not bow down to them. **8**Instead, remain loyal to Yahweh your God, as you have been doing. **9**Yahweh has forced many very strong nations to leave so that you could live here. From the time you entered this land until now, no one has been able to resist you. **10**It is as if one of your soldiers can make a thousand enemy soldiers run away. That is because Yahweh your God is fighting for you as he promised to do.

11But you must be very careful to keep loving Yahweh your God. **12**Suppose you become disloyal to Yahweh and make friends with the people groups that are still living in this land. Suppose you let your daughters marry their sons and your sons marry their daughters. Suppose you regularly do things together. **13**I can assure you that if you do that, Yahweh your God will no longer force them to leave so that you can live here. They will become like different kinds of traps that will catch you. They will become like whips that hurt your skin. They will become like thorns that stick you in the eye. Your people group will become weaker and weaker until none of you live any longer in this good land that Yahweh your God has given to you. **14**It is almost time for me to die, as everyone else does. You know deep within you that Yahweh he has done every single thing he promised to do for you. **15**He has given to you all the good things that he promised to give you. However, if you do these wrong things that I have described, he will just as surely make the bad things happen to you that he also described. None of you will still be living in this good land that Yahweh your God has given to you. **16**Suppose you do not obey the covenant that Yahweh made with you. Suppose you go and worship other gods and bow down to them. Then Yahweh will become very angry with you. Very soon none of you will be living any longer in this good land that he has given to you."

Chapter 24

1Joshua brought all of the Israelites together in the city of Shechem. Their elders, leaders, judges, and officials all reported there in the presence of God. **2**Joshua told all the Israelites, "This is what Yahweh, the God we Israelite people worship, wants me to tell you: 'Long ago, your ancestors, including Abraham's father Terah and Abraham's younger brother Nahor, lived far beyond the Euphrates River. There they worshiped other gods. **3**But I took your ancestor Abraham from beyond the Euphrates River, and I led him into the land of Canaan. I gave him many descendants through his son Isaac. **4**I gave Isaac his own sons, Jacob and Esau. I gave Esau the hill country of Seir to live in. But I sent Jacob and his children down to Egypt, and they lived there for many years. **5**{When the Egyptians made your ancestors slaves,} I sent Moses and his brother Aaron to Egypt {to rescue them}. I caused many terrible plagues that made the people of Egypt suffer. After that, I brought your people out of Egypt. **6**When I brought your ancestors out of Egypt, they came to the sea. The Egyptian army pursued them with chariots and on horseback as far as the Sea of Reeds. **7**Then you pleaded with me to help you, and I caused darkness to come between you Israelites and the Egyptian army. {I made a dry path through the sea so that the Israelites could go through it, but when the Egyptians tried to follow them,} I made the water come back and it covered the Egyptian army {so all the soldiers drowned}. You Israelites saw what I did to the Egyptians. After that you lived in the desert for many years. **8**Then I brought you to the land where the Amorites lived, on the east side of the Jordan River. They attacked you, but I enabled you to defeat them and capture their land. You saw everything that I did for you. **9**Then Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, prepared his army and attacked Israel. He sent for Balaam son of Beor and told him to get me to curse your people. **10**But I would not do what Balaam asked. Instead, I made him bless you, so that he was not able to harm you. **11**Then you all crossed the Jordan River and came to Jericho. The army of Jericho fought against you, as did the armies of the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. But I enabled you to conquer them all. **12**I sent swarms of hornets ahead of you, and this helped you two Amorite kings. You did not do this with your own weapons. {I, Yahweh, was the one who actually defeated them.} **13**So I gave you a land that you had not cleared or plowed, and I gave you cities that you did not build. Now you live in those cities, and you eat the grapes from grapevines that you did not plant and olives from trees that you did not plant.' **14**{That was what Yahweh wanted me, Joshua, to tell all of you.} Now you must worship Yahweh and obey him genuinely and consistently. Throw away the idols that your ancestors worshiped when they lived on the far side of the Euphrates River and when they lived in Egypt. Worship Yahweh alone. **15**Now if you do not want to worship Yahweh, then you must decide today what gods you will worship. You may decide that you want to worship the gods that your ancestors worshiped when they lived on the other side of the Euphrates River. You may decide that you want to worship the gods that the Amorites worshiped who used to live in this land. But as for me and my family, we will worship Yahweh." **16**The Israelites responded, "We would never abandon Yahweh and worship other gods! **17**Yahweh is our God! After all, he was the one who brought our ancestors here from Egypt. He rescued them from that land where they were slaves. We saw him perform great miracles, and he protected us when we were traveling, even though we had to pass through the territory of many

other nations. **18**Yahweh forced all the people who were here to leave so that we could live here. He defeated the
Amorites who lived in this land. So we will worship only Yahweh. He is our God." **19**But Joshua replied to the people,
"You do not seem to realize what is involved in worshiping Yahweh! He is a holy God, and he will not allow you to
worship any other gods. He will not overlook it if you break his laws or sin against him. **20**If you abandon Yahweh
and worship other gods, then he will stop helping you and instead he will harm you until he has destroyed you. He
will do that even after he has done such good things for you." **21**But the people answered Joshua, "Even so, we
want to worship Yahweh." **22**Then Joshua said, "You are making a promise to what you have said. You have chosen
Yahweh, and you are promising to worship him alone." They replied, "Yes, that is what we promise to do." **23**So
Joshua told them, "Then you must throw away any other idols you have, and devote yourselves entirely to Yahweh,
the God who has done so much for us Israelites." **24**The people replied, "We will worship Yahweh as our God, and
we will obey what he tells us to do." **25**On that same day, Joshua made a covenant with the people. There at
Shechem, he wrote down for them all the decrees and laws that Yahweh commanded them to obey. **26**He wrote all
those things down in the book of the law of God. Then he got a large stone and set it up there at Shechem, under
the large oak tree that grew beside the place where Yahweh's sacred tent was. **27**Joshua told all the people, "Look!
This stone will always be a reminder to us. This is the place where I told you what Yahweh wanted to say to you
{and you promised that you would serve him}. This stone will remind you of your promise so that you are not
disloyal to God." **28**Then Joshua sent the people back to their homes in the places that the leaders had assigned to
them. **29**After this, Joshua son of Nun, the servant of Yahweh, died. He was 110 years old when he died. **30**The
Israelites buried his body on his own property in Timnath Serah. That is in the hill country of Ephraim, north of
Mount Gaash. **31**The people of Israel continued to worship Yahweh during Joshua's lifetime and during the lifetimes
of the elders who outlived Joshua. Those elders had seen everything that Yahweh had done for Israel. **32**The people
of Israel had brought Joseph's bones with them when they left Egypt. Now they buried his bones at Shechem, in the
piece of land that Jacob had bought long ago for the price of 100 pieces of silver. He had bought it from Hamor, the
father of Shechem. That piece of land became a permanent possession for Joseph's descendants. **33**Eleazar son of
Aaron also died. The Israelites buried his body at Gibeah, the city that belonged to his son Phinehas, in the hill
country of Ephraim.

Judges

Chapter 1

1After Joshua died, the Israelite people asked Yahweh, “Which of our tribes should send their soldiers into the hill country to attack the Canaanites first?”

2Yahweh replied, “The soldiers of the tribe of Judah must attack first. I have already made the people of Judah the owners of the land {in Canaan that Joshua assigned to them}.”

3Then the men of Judah went to their fellow Israelites, the men from the tribe of Simeon. They said to them, “Come and help us fight the Canaanites. That way we will be able to conquer the territory that Yahweh has given to us. {If you do that,} we will go with you and help you conquer the territory that Yahweh has given to you.” So the soldiers of the tribe of Simeon went with the soldiers of the tribe of Judah.

4So the soldiers from the tribes of Judah and Simeon went together. Yahweh enabled them to defeat the army of the Canaanites and Perizzites. At the city of Bezek, they killed about 10,000 enemy soldiers. **5**The king of Bezek, Adoni-Bezek, personally commanded his army to defend his city. But the Israelite soldiers were able to defeat his army of Canaanites and Perizzites. **6**Adoni-Bezek tried to run away, but the soldiers from the tribes of Judah and Simeon chased him and caught him. Then they cut off his thumbs and his big toes.

7Adoni-Bezek said, “My army captured 70 kings. We cut off their thumbs and big toes. After that, we gave them little to eat, and we humiliated them. Because I did that to them, now God has done the same thing to me.” Then the soldiers took Adoni-Bezek to the city of Jerusalem. That was where he died.

8The soldiers from the tribes of Judah and Simeon fought against the people of Jerusalem, and they captured that city. They killed all the people who lived there, and they burned down all the buildings in the city.

9After that, the soldiers from the tribes of Judah and Simeon went to fight against the Canaanites who lived in the hill country, the southern wilderness, and the western lowland. **10**The soldiers from the tribes of Judah and Simeon also went to fight against the Canaanites who lived in the city of Hebron. (People used to call that city Kiriath Arba). {Those Canaanites were from} the clans of Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai. The soldiers defeated them.

11Then they left that area and went to fight against the people who lived in the city of Debir. (People used to call that city Kiriath Sepher.) **12**A man whose name was} Caleb {was commanding the soldiers. He} told them, “I need someone to lead the attack against Kiriath Sepher and conquer that city. I will allow the man who does that to marry my daughter Aksah.” **13**Caleb had a younger brother whose name was Kenaz. Kenaz had a son whose name was Othniel. Othniel commanded the soldiers who captured the city of Kiriath Sepher. So Caleb allowed Othniel to marry his daughter Aksah.

14Aksah came {to Kiriath Sepher} to marry Othniel. When she got there, she convinced Othniel to let her ask her father for some land they could farm. She {went to see her father and respectfully} got off the donkey she was riding. Caleb asked her, “What would you like me to do for you?”

15She replied, “Please do a favor for me. You have given {my husband and} me some land in an area where it is very dry. So please also give us some land that has springs on it.” So Caleb gave her some land on higher ground that had a spring and some land on lower ground that had a spring.

16The father-in-law of Moses belonged to the Kenite people group. Some of his descendants had been living in the area of Jericho, which people called Palm Tree City. They went with some people from the tribe of Judah to the wilderness {in the southern part} of the territory that belonged to that tribe. They settled with those Judeans in the dry region that is around the city of Arad.

17The army of the tribe Judah then went with their fellow Israelites, the army of the tribe of Simeon{, to help them conquer the territory that Joshua had assigned to them.} They defeated the Canaanites who lived in the town of Zephath. They completely destroyed that city. Then they gave it a new name, Hormah{, which means “complete destruction.”} **18**The soldiers from the tribes of Judah and Simeon also captured the cities of Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron and all the land around those cities. **19**So Yahweh helped the soldiers from Judah to capture the hill country. But they could not force the people who were living in the plains to leave. That was because those people had {better weapons. They had} chariots that had iron parts.

20The people of the tribe of Judah gave the city of Hebron to Caleb because Moses had promised him that he could have that city. Caleb forced the three clans whose ancestor was Anak to leave that area. **21**But the tribe of Benjamin could not force the Jebusite people group to stop living in the city of Jerusalem. So those Jebusites stayed in Jerusalem and lived there with the tribe of Benjamin. They are still living with them there now.

22Just as the soldiers from Judah and Simeon had done, soldiers from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh went {to conquer the territory that Joshua had assigned to them. They first attacked} the city of Bethel, and Yahweh helped them. **23**They sent some spies to find out everything they could about Bethel. (People used to call that city Luz.) **24**The spies saw a man who was coming out of the city. They said to him, “If you show us a way to get into the city, then we will be kind to you {and not kill you when we capture the city}.” **25**So the man showed them a way to get into the city. The soldiers from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh went in and killed all the people who lived in the city. But they allowed the man and his whole family to leave safely. **26**That man went to the area where the Hittite people group lived. He built a city there and named it Luz. That is still the name of that city now.

27People from the Canaanite people group were living in the cities of Beth Shan, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, and Megiddo. They were also living in the villages around those cities. The soldiers from the tribe of Manasseh were not able to force them to leave their homes. That was because those Canaanites fought very hard to stay there. **28**Later, the Israelites became stronger, and they forced the Canaanites to work for them as their slaves. But they did not force all the Canaanites to leave their land. **29**The soldiers from the tribe of Ephraim were not able to force the Canaanites who were living in the city of Gezer to leave. So the Canaanites continued to live in that city with the tribe of Ephraim. **30**There were also Canaanites living in the cities of Kitron and Nahalol. The soldiers from the tribe of Zebulun were not able to force them to leave. So those Canaanites stayed in those cities and lived with the tribe of Zebulun. But the people of Zebulun forced them to work as their slaves. **31**There were Canaanites living in the cities of Akko, Sidon, Ahlab, Aczib, Helbah, Aphek, and Rehob. The soldiers from the tribe of Asher were not able to force them to leave. **32**So those Canaanites continued to live in those cities. The people of the tribe of Asher lived with them, because they were not able to force them to leave. **33**There were Canaanites living in the cities of Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath. The soldiers from the tribe of Naphtali were not able to force them to leave. So those Canaanites continued to live in that area. The people of the tribe of Naphtali lived with them. But they forced the ones who lived in Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath to work as their slaves. **34**The Amorites forced the people of the tribe of Dan to live in the hills. That was because they did not allow them to come down and live on the plain. **35**The Amorites fought hard to keep living at Mount Heres and in the cities of Aijalon and Shaalbim{, and so the Israelites were not able to force them to leave}. But when the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh became stronger, they forced those Amorites to work as their slaves. **36**The land where the Amorites lived extended from the Ascent of Akrabbim {toward the west} beyond Sela, up into the hill country.

Chapter 2

1An angel representing Yahweh went from Gilgal to a place that the people of Israel would soon call Bochim. He said to the Israelite people, “Your ancestors were slaves in Egypt, but I set them free, and they escaped. I promised your ancestors that I would give this land to you, and I have now brought you to it. I told them I would never break the promises I made to them. **2**But I also told them that you, their descendants, must never make any peace treaties with the people who lived in this land. You were supposed to tear down all the altars {where those people made sacrifices to idols}. But you have not obeyed me. You have done a wicked thing {by making peace treaties

with them and not destroying their altars}. **3**So now, as I warned you {through Joshua}, I will no longer help you force the people who live here to leave. They will bother you continually, as if they were thorns in your sides. And when you worship their idols, it will be as if a hunter catches you in a trap {and kills you}."

4After the angel representing Yahweh had said these things to all the Israelites, they cried loudly. **5**So they named that place Bochim, which means "weeping." They offered sacrifices there to Yahweh.

6After Joshua had sent the people of Israel away {from the assembly at Shechem}, each group had gone to occupy the land that Joshua had assigned to them. **7**The Israelites had obeyed Yahweh for as long as Joshua was alive. After he died, there were still some older leaders alive who had seen all the miracles that Yahweh had done for Israel. For as long as those leaders were alive, the people had continued to obey Yahweh.

8Yahweh's servant Joshua was 110 years old when he died. Joshua's father's name was Nun. **9**The Israelites buried the body of Joshua within the territory that he had received from Moses. That was at Timnath Heres, north of Mount Gaash. That is in the hilly area where the descendants of Ephraim settled.

10Finally, all the people who had lived at the same time as Joshua died. After that, more people grew up who did not know Yahweh. They had also not seen the miracles he had done for the people of Israel. **11-13**The Israelites then did things that Yahweh had said were very evil. They worshiped different idols that represented gods such as Baal. They stopped worshiping Yahweh, the God their ancestors had worshiped. He was the one who had brought their ancestors out of Egypt. Instead, they began to worship the various gods that the people groups around them worshiped. They bowed down to those gods in order to honor them. This caused Yahweh to be very angry. When the Israelites stopped worshiping Yahweh and started worshiping Baal, they also started worshiping female fertility goddesses such as Ashtoreth. **14**This made Yahweh very angry with the Israelites. So he allowed people from other groups to attack the Israelites and steal their crops and animals. Yahweh allowed the hostile nations around them to conquer them. The Israelites were no longer able to defeat their enemies in battle. **15**Whenever the Israelites went to fight their enemies, Yahweh always worked against them and allowed their enemies to defeat them. That was just what he had warned them he would do. So the Israelites were greatly distressed.

16But then Yahweh brought leaders to them. These leaders rescued the Israelites from the powerful enemies who had been attacking them. **17**But the Israelites did not obey those leaders. Instead, they were unfaithful to Yahweh and worshiped false gods. They bowed down to idols that represented those gods. They were not like their ancestors. Their ancestors had obeyed what Yahweh commanded. But these younger people quickly stopped behaving as their ancestors had behaved. **18**The Israelites were groaning because their enemies were treating them badly and making them suffer. Yahweh heard them groaning and felt sorry for them. So he brought leaders to them, and he helped each leader rescue the people from their enemies. He did that for as long as the leader was alive. **19**But after that leader died, the people stopped living as God wanted. Instead, they did even more evil things than the Israelites who had lived before them. They worshiped other gods and bowed down to them and did what they thought those gods wanted them to do. They stubbornly continued to do very wicked things.

20This made Yahweh very angry with the Israelite people. He said, "These people have disobeyed the agreement that I made with their ancestors. They have not done what I told them to do. **21**When Joshua died, there were still some other people groups living in this land. Because the Israelites are disobeying me, I will no longer help them force any of those people groups to leave. **22**Instead, I will use those people groups to create difficult situations for the Israelites. That will show whether or not they will consistently do what I want them to do, as their ancestors did." **23**That is why Yahweh did not allow Joshua and his army to force those people groups to leave. Instead, he allowed those people groups to stay in the land for a long time after the people of Israel arrived.

Chapter 3

1The younger Israelites had not fought in any of the wars against the Canaanites. Yahweh wanted them to show faith and courage. So he allowed some enemy people groups to stay in the land. **2**Yahweh did that in order to teach the new generation of Israelites how to wage war, since they had no experience fighting battles before. **3**These are

the people groups that Yahweh allowed to stay in the land: the Philistines and their five leaders, the Canaanites, the people living in and around the city of Sidon, and the Hivites living in the mountains of Lebanon between Mount Baal Hermon and Lebo Hamath. **4**Yahweh left those people groups there to test the Israelites. He wanted to see whether they would obey the commands that he had told Moses to give to their ancestors. **5**That was why the Israelites lived among these people groups: the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. **6**The Israelite men married women from those people groups. They also allowed their daughters to marry men from those people groups. And they worshiped the gods of those people groups.

7The Israelites then did things that Yahweh had said were very wicked. They stopped worshiping Yahweh, the God their ancestors had worshiped. Instead, they started to worship idols that represented gods such as Baal and goddesses such as Asherah. **8**This made Yahweh very angry with the people of Israel. So he allowed Cushan-Rishathaim, the king of Aram Naharaim {in Mesopotamia}, to conquer them. Cushan-Rishathaim ruled over the people of Israel for eight years. **9**But when the people of Israel pleaded with Yahweh to help them, he brought a leader to rescue them. This leader was Othniel, the son of Caleb's younger brother Kenaz. **10**Yahweh's Spirit gave Othniel special strength and courage to be a leader for the Israelites. Then he led an army that fought against the army of Cushan-Rishathaim, the king of Aram. Yahweh enabled the Israelites to win this battle. So Othniel defeated Cushan-Rishathaim {and he no longer ruled over the people of Israel}. **11**After that, the land of Israel was a peaceful place for the next 40 years, until Othniel son of Kenaz died.

12Then the Israelites once again did things that Yahweh had said were very wicked. Because they were doing these things, Yahweh gave Eglon, the king of Moab, a stronger army than the Israelites had {so that he could defeat them}. **13**Eglon persuaded the leaders of the Ammonites and the Amalekites to join their armies with his army to attack Israel. They defeated the Israelites and captured Jericho, which people called Palm Tree City. **14**Then King Eglon of Moab ruled the Israelites for 18 years.

15After that, the Israelites again pleaded with Yahweh to help them. So he brought another leader to rescue them. This leader was Ehud, the son of Gera. He was from the tribe of Benjamin, and he was left-handed. King Eglon of Moab made the Israelites send him goods such as gold, silver, animals, and crops every year so that he would not attack them. This time, the Israelites put Ehud in charge of delivering those goods. **16**Ehud had made a special sword to bring with him on this trip. Both of its edges were sharp, and it was only half a meter long. He hid it under his clothes by strapping it onto his right thigh. **17**Ehud made sure that King Eglon of Moab received all of the goods that the Israelites had sent. (Eglon was a very fat man.) **18**After he had delivered all of the goods, Ehud told the men who had carried them to go back to Israel. **19**Ehud went with the men as far as the boundary stones near the city of Gilgal. There he told the other men to go on, but he himself turned around {and went back to the king of Moab. When he arrived at the palace,} he told the king, "Your majesty, I have a secret message for you." So the king told all his servants to be quiet, and he sent them out of the room.

20This left Eglon sitting all by himself in the room of his palace where he stayed cool in the heat of summer. Ehud came close to him and said, "I have a message for you from God." The king stood up from his throne {to receive the message}. **21**As the king got up, Ehud reached with his left hand and pulled the dagger from his right thigh. He plunged it into the king's stomach. **22**Ehud plunged the sword in so far that even the handle went into the king's belly. Ehud did not pull the sword out. He left it there, with the king's fat surrounding it. {From the force of the blow,} Eglon's bowels discharged. **23**Then Ehud stepped out of the room into its entrance area. He closed the doors to the room, and he bolted them shut as he closed them.

24Then Ehud ran away from the palace. King Eglon's servants came back, but they found that someone had locked the doors to the room. They said {to each other}, "The king must be relieving himself in there." **25**So they waited. But when the king did not open the doors of the room for a long time, they became concerned because they had left him alone for so long. They got a key and unlocked and opened the doors. And they saw that their king was lying on the floor dead {from the sword wound}.

26The servants had taken so long to enter the king's room that Ehud had time to escape. He ran back to Israel, passed by the boundary stones {at Gilgal}, and arrived at the city of Seirah. **27**That city was in the hilly area where

the descendants of Ephraim lived. When Ehud got there, he blew a ram's horn {to call the people to join him in fighting against the people of Moab}. So the Israelites went with him down from the hills {toward the Jordan River}. Ehud was leading them.

28Ehud told the men he was leading, "Yahweh is going to enable us to defeat our enemies, the people of Moab. So follow me!" So they followed him down to the Jordan River, and they stationed some of their men at the place where people could walk across the river into Moab. That way they could kill any people from Moab who tried to cross the river to escape. **29**At that time, the Israelites killed about 10,000 Moabite soldiers {who had been occupying the city of Jericho}. They were all strong and capable soldiers, but the Israelites killed them all. **30**On that day, the Israelites conquered the people of Moab. After that, the land of Israel was a peaceful place for the next 80 years.

31After Ehud died, Shamgar, the son of Anath, became their leader. In one battle, Shamgar killed 600 Philistine soldiers even though his only weapon was an ox goad. In that way, he rescued the Israelites from the Philistines.

Chapter 4

1After Ehud died, the Israelites once again did things that Yahweh had said were very wicked. **2**A strong king whose name was Jabin ruled the city of Hazor and many other parts of the region of Canaan. Yahweh allowed Jabin to conquer the Israelites with his army because they had disobeyed him. The commander of Jabin's army was a man whose name was Sisera. He lived in a place that people called Harosheth Hagoyim. **3**Sisera's army had 900 chariots that had iron parts. He cruelly oppressed the Israelites for 20 years. Then they pleaded with Yahweh to help them.

4At that time, a woman whose name was Deborah was a leader of the people of Israel. She was a prophetess. Her husband's name was Lappidoth. **5**She would sit under her palm tree (which people called Deborah's Palm Tree) at a place between Ramah and Bethel in the hilly area where the descendants of Ephraim lived. The Israelites would come to her and ask her to help them settle their disputes. **6**One day she sent for Barak, the son of Abinoam. She called him to come to her. He was from Kedesh, in the area where the descendants of Naphtali lived. She told him, "Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, is commanding you to do something. He is telling you to gather an army of {at least} 10,000 men from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun. Have this army assemble at Mount Tabor. **7**Sisera is the commander of King Jabin's army. Yahweh will make him come near you with his chariots and his army. He will come to the Kishon River {a few miles away from you}. Yahweh will enable your men to defeat them."

8Barak told her, "I will only go if you go with me. If you do not go with me, then I will not go."

9She replied, "I will certainly go with you. But because you would not go without me, Yahweh will enable a woman to defeat Sisera. The result will be that no one will honor you for doing that." So Deborah left her home and went with Barak to Kedesh. **10**Barak called for the men of Zebulun and Naphtali to assemble at Kedesh. With Barak as their commander, 10,000 men came there. Deborah accompanied this army.

11Now there was a man whose name was Heber who belonged to the Kenite people group. (He was a descendant of Moses' father-in-law Hobab.) He had moved away from the rest of the Kenites. He was living at this time near the big oak tree at Zaanannim, near Kedesh.

12People told Sisera that Barak son of Abinoam had assembled an army on Mount Tabor. **13**When Sisera heard that, he gathered all his troops. They brought all 900 of the chariots that had iron parts, and they marched from Harosheth Haggoyim to the Kishon River {to attack Barak and his army}.

14Then Deborah said to Barak, "It is time to attack! Today Yahweh is going to enable your army to defeat the army of Sisera. Yahweh is already fighting against Sisera for you." So Barak led his thousands of troops down the slopes of Mount Tabor {to fight with Sisera}. **15**As Barak and his troops advanced, Yahweh caused Sisera and all his chariots and his army to become disorganized. The Israelites were killing so many of his soldiers that Sisera jumped down from his chariot and ran away. **16**But Barak and his soldiers chased after the other chariots and

enemy soldiers all the way to Harosheth Haggoyim. They killed all of the soldiers in Sisera's army. None of them got away.

17But Sisera ran away to the place where Heber the Kenite was staying. He went up to the tent where Heber's wife Jael lived. He did that because Heber and his family were good friends of Sisera's master Jabin, the king of the city of Hazor{, so he thought Jael would hide him}.

18Jael went out to greet Sisera. She said to him, "Sir, please come into my tent. You do not have to be afraid." So he went into her tent {and lay down}, and she covered him with a blanket {to hide him}.

19He said to her, "I am thirsty, so would you please give me some water?" So she opened a leather container of milk, and she gave him a drink. Then she covered him with the blanket again.

20He told her, "Stand near the door of the tent {to meet anyone who arrives}. If someone {who is looking for me} comes and asks you, 'Is anyone else here?' say 'No.'"

21Sisera was very exhausted, so he soon fell asleep. While he was sleeping, Jael picked up a hammer and a tent peg and crept quietly over to him. Suddenly she pounded the peg into his skull. She hammered it all the way through his head until it stuck into the ground. This killed Sisera.

22Meanwhile, Barak was looking for Sisera. When he got to Jael's tent, she went out to greet him. She told him, "The man you are looking for is in here!" So he followed her into the tent, and there he saw Sisera lying dead with the tent peg through his head.

23And that was how God enabled the Israelites that day to defeat the army of Jabin, one of the kings of the Canaanites. **24**The Israelites had become stronger and stronger, and finally they completely defeated the army of Jabin, that Canaanite king.

Chapter 5

1At the time when the Israelites defeated Jabin's army, Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang a song to celebrate. This is the song that they sang:

2"We should all praise Yahweh for the Israelite men who promised to fight

and who fought willingly.

3Even the most important people in the world

should pay attention to this!

I am going to sing to Yahweh.

With this song, I will praise Yahweh, the God of Israel.

4Yahweh, when you came from Seir,

when you marched from that land that people also call Edom,

thunder shook the earth

and clouds poured down rain from the skies.

5The mountains shook when you came,

just as Mount Sinai shook when you appeared there,

because you are Yahweh,

the God whom we Israelites worship.

6After our leader Shamgar son of Anath died

and before Jael helped us defeat the army of Jabin,

we Israelites were afraid to walk on the main roads,

{because Jabin's soldiers would rob us}.

Instead, when our people had to travel,

they used little roads that wound through the countryside.

7Israelites who lived in small villages left them

and moved into walled cities {for safety}.

But then I, Deborah, became a leader of the Israelite people,

and I protected them just as a mother protects her children.

8When the Israelite people {abandoned Yahweh} and began to worship different gods,

enemies attacked their cities.

The Israelites {could barely defend themselves

because they} had hardly any weapons.

9So I am very thankful for the Israelite leaders

and soldiers who willingly fought against Sisera.

We should all praise Yahweh for them!

10You wealthy people who ride on white donkeys,

sitting on nice, padded saddles,

and you poorer people who just walk on the road,

think about all this!

11Listen to the songs that people sing at the places along the road where travelers stop to get water.

Those songs tell about how Yahweh acted righteously when he enabled the Israelite warriors to defeat their enemies.

After that, Yahweh's people were able to return safely to their cities.

12Sing energetically, Deborah! Sing from your own vivid recollections!

Now is the time, Barak son of Abinoam, to show the prisoners that your army captured.

13The Israelite people who had scattered for safety

came down from the highlands to where their leaders were gathering an army.

These were men who were loyal to Yahweh,

and they came to help me, Barak, fight against the enemy soldiers.

14Some soldiers came from the tribe of Ephraim. They came from land that had once belonged to the descendants of Amalek.

Soldiers also came from the tribe of Benjamin. They reached the Israelite camp before the ones from Ephraim.

Military leaders from the clan of Machir in the tribe of Manasseh led their troops to fight.

So did officers from the tribe of Zebulun. They carried staffs to indicate their rank.

15Leaders from the tribe of Issachar brought their soldiers when Deborah told Barak to gather an army.

They fully supported Barak. He led these soldiers down into the valley {to fight Sisera}.

But the men of the tribe of Reuben could not decide what they should do.

16They should not have stayed away from the battle,

taking care of their sheep and listening to shepherds playing their flutes.

But the men of the tribe of Reuben could not decide what they should do.

17So the men of all the tribes living in the Gilead area stayed at home, east of the Jordan River.

And the men of the tribe of Dan just kept fishing in the sea {when they should have been helping to fight against Sisera}.

"Similarly, the men of the tribe of Asher did not leave their harbors on the seacoast {to come and help fight}.

18But the soldiers from the tribe of Zebulun risked their lives on the battlefield.

The soldiers from the tribe of Naphtali also risked their lives in order to occupy the high ground on the battlefield.

19Sisera brought an army of soldiers from many Canaanite kingdoms {that were subject to Jabin} to fight against us.

They fought a battle against us near the city of Taanach.

That city is near the river that flows through the Valley of Megiddo. But {they did not defeat us, and so} they did not carry any valuable things away from the battle.

20It was as if the stars in the sky fought for us,

and as if those stars fought against Sisera,

as they moved across the sky.

21The Kishon River, that river that has been there for a long time, was drowning Sisera's soldiers.

So I told myself to be brave and to keep fighting.

22Then the horses of Sisera's army {ran away from the battle.

As they ran, they} pounded the ground with their hooves.

Those powerful horses kept galloping along.

23{After the battle,} an angel representing Yahweh said,

'The people who live in the town of Meroz did not help Yahweh by stopping Sisera's army from retreating.

And so you must call for Yahweh to punish them by making bad things happen to them.'

24But God is very pleased with the woman whose name is Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite.

He is more pleased with her than with all the other women who live in tents.

25Although Sisera only asked for some water, Jael gave him some milk.

She brought him some yogurt in the kind of bowl that rulers have.

26Then{, when Sisera was asleep,} Jael picked up a tent peg with her left hand and a heavy hammer with her right hand.

She pounded the tent peg into Sisera's head so hard that it went right through his temple. This smashed his head.

27As Jael stood over him, Sisera died {from the crushing blow to his head}.

He did not even move from where he was when she hit him. He died right there.

28Sisera's mother looked out through her window

{to see whether he was returning from the battle}.

She asked, 'Why is he taking so long to come home in his chariot?

Why have I not yet heard his chariot horses pounding the ground with their feet?'

29Some tactful ladies in her household reassured her,

and she told herself the same thing they told her:

30'Sisera and his soldiers are probably {late returning because they are} dividing up

the things and the people they captured after the battle.

Each soldier will get one or two women as slaves.

Each of Sisera's soldiers will also get one or two expensive robes that have bright colors and gold thread for decoration.

They will probably wear them home from the battle to show that they won.'

31{But that is not what happened!}

Yahweh, I hope that all your enemies will die as Sisera did!

And I wish that all those who love you, Yahweh, will be as strong as the sun when it rises!"

After that, the land of Israel was a peaceful place for the next 40 years.

Chapter 6

1But then the Israelites once again did things that Yahweh had said were very wicked. So he allowed the people of Midian to conquer them and rule them for seven years. **2**The people of Midian treated the Israelites so cruelly that they hid from them. The Israelites made places where they could live on mountains, in caves, and in other safe locations. **3**This is what the enemies of the Israelites were doing to them. The Israelites would plant crops in their fields. Once those crops began to grow, enemies from Midian and Amalek and from desert tribes would come into Israel. **4**They set up their tents in the land, and their animals devoured the crops as far south as Gaza. They did not

leave anything for the Israelites to eat. They also took away their sheep, cattle, and donkeys. **5**They came into Israel with their tents and their livestock. When they came, there were so many of them that they seemed like a huge swarm of locusts. One could hardly count how many of them arrived riding on their camels. They came into the land of Israel and ruined the land, so that crops could not grow there. **6**The people of Midian took almost everything the Israelites owned. So finally the Israelites pleaded for Yahweh to help them.

7When the Israelites pleaded with Yahweh to help them because of what the people from Midian were doing to them, **8**Yahweh sent a prophet to them. He told them, “Yahweh is the God we Israelites are supposed to worship. He sent me to tell you, ‘I brought your ancestors out of Egypt. I rescued them from that place where they were slaves. **9**I made the Egyptian rulers who had made them slaves set them free. When you got to this land, I enabled you to defeat your enemies. I forced them to leave, and I allowed you to live here instead. **10**I told your ancestors, “I am Yahweh, the God whom you must worship. Once you Israelites are living in the land that belonged to the Amorites, you must not worship the gods that they worshiped.” But you have disobeyed what I told them.’”

11One day an angel representing Yahweh came and sat under a big oak tree in the town of Ophrah. That tree belonged to Joash, who was from the clan of Abiezer. Joash’ s son Gideon was threshing wheat in the pit where they pressed grapes to make wine. He was threshing the grain there because it was a place where the people of Midian could not see him. **12**The angel representing Yahweh went over to Gideon and told him, “You mighty soldier, Yahweh is helping you!”

13Gideon replied, “Pardon me for asking, sir, but if Yahweh is really helping us, then why have all these bad things happened to us? Yahweh is not doing any miracles for us like the ones that our ancestors have told us about. They have said that he rescued them from being slaves in Egypt. But now Yahweh has abandoned us. He is allowing the people from Midian to rule us.”

14Then Yahweh looked right at him and said, “I have made you strong enough to rescue the Israelites from the people of Midian who are ruling you. So lead an army against them. I am commanding you to do that!”

15Gideon replied, “I am sorry, sir, but I do not believe that I can rescue the Israelites. This is why I cannot: my clan is the smallest and weakest one in the whole tribe of Manasseh, and I am the least important person in my whole family!”

16Yahweh said to him, “I will help you{, and so you will be able to rescue the Israelites}. I will enable you to defeat the entire Midianite army at one time.”

17Gideon replied, “If you truly are pleased with me, then let me ask you to do something that will prove that you, Yahweh, really are the one who is speaking with me. **18**I would like to go and prepare a special meal and bring it to you. Please do not leave here until I get back.”

Yahweh answered, “{I agree.} I will wait here until you come back.”

19So Gideon hurried to his home. He killed a young goat and cooked it. He also took about 22 liters of flour and baked some bread without yeast. Then he put the cooked meat in a basket, and he put the broth from the meat in a pot. He brought the meat and the bread to Yahweh, who was still sitting under the oak tree. Gideon invited him to eat these foods as a special meal.

20But Yahweh told Gideon, “Put the meat and the bread on this rock. Then pour the broth on top of it.” So that is what Gideon did. **21**Then the angel representing Yahweh reached out and touched the meat and bread with the tip of the walking stick that he was holding. Flames came up from the rock and completely burned up the meat and the bread! And then the angel representing Yahweh disappeared. **22**Then Gideon realized that it had actually been an angel representing Yahweh who had come and spoken with him. He exclaimed, “Oh, no! Yahweh my Lord, I just saw your angel in person! {No one can see you and live, so I am going to die!}”

23But Yahweh called to him and said, “You are safe. You do not have to be afraid. I am not going to kill you.”

24Then Gideon built an altar there to worship Yahweh. He gave it the name Yahweh is Peace. That altar is still there at this time in the town of Ophrah in the land that belongs to the Abiezrite clan.

25Then, that same night, Yahweh told Gideon, “Tear down the altar that your father built to worship the god Baal. Also cut down the pole for worshiping the goddess Asherah that is beside that altar. Use the young bull that your father owns {to pull down the altar}. But also bring another bull with you that your father owns, the one that is seven years old. **26**Build a plain stone altar here on this hill to worship me, your God Yahweh. Take the wood from the Asherah pole that you cut down and use it to make a fire. Then burn the meat of that seven-year-old bull on that fire as a burnt offering to me.”

27Then Gideon got ten of his servants and together they did what Yahweh had commanded him to do. But he was afraid of what the other members of his family and the other people who lived in the town would do to him if they found out that he had done that. So they did it at night.

28The next morning, when the people who lived in the town got up, they saw that the altar to Baal was in ruins. The Asherah pole that had been next to it was gone. They saw that there was a new altar on the hill above the town, and on it were the remains of a bull that someone had sacrificed.

29The people asked each other, “Who did this?” When some of the town leaders investigated, someone finally told them. So they announced publicly, “It was Gideon son of Joash who did this.”

30The men of the town came to the house of Joash. They told him, “Bring your son out here! We want to kill him to punish him for destroying the altar of our god Baal and for cutting down the Asherah pole where we worship!”

31But Joash {refused to bring Gideon out. He} told the hostile crowd that had gathered around his house, “You should not have to argue a case on behalf of Baal! You should not have to defend him! Anyone who thinks he needs to defend Baal is the one whom we should execute. In fact, we should execute him right now! If Baal really is a god, he ought to be able to defend himself when someone tears down his altar!” **32**And that was how Gideon got the nickname Jerubbaal{, which means, “Let Baal defend himself.”} People said, “Yes, Baal should be the one to punish this man for tearing down his altar.”

33Soon after that, the people of Midian and Amalek and the desert tribes that were their allies sent their armies together across the Jordan River to attack the Israelites. Their soldiers set up their camp in the Valley of Jezreel.
34Then Yahweh’s Spirit gave Gideon special strength and courage. Gideon blew a ram’s horn {to call the people of Israel to join him in fighting against these invaders}. The men from his clan of Abiezer gathered to fight, with him as their commander. **35**Gideon also sent messengers throughout the territory of the tribe of Manasseh to tell its soldiers to come and fight under his command. He also sent messengers throughout the territories of the tribes of Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and soldiers from those tribes came and joined his army.

36Then Gideon said to God, “I want to be sure that you are truly going to enable me to rescue the Israelite people as you promised. **37**Please confirm that by doing something for me. Tonight I will put a dry wool fleece on this place where people thresh grain. Tomorrow morning, if only the fleece is wet with dew and the ground is dry, then I will know that you are going to enable me to rescue the people of Israel as you promised.” **38**And that is what happened. When Gideon got up the next morning, he picked up the fleece and he squeezed enough dew from it to fill a bowl with water! {But the ground all around the fleece was dry.}

39Then Gideon said to God, “Please do not be angry with me, but I would like to ask you to do one more thing. Tonight let me put the fleece out again. This time, please let only the fleece remain dry, and let the whole ground become wet with dew.” **40**And that night God did what Gideon had asked him to do. The next morning only the fleece was dry, but the whole ground was wet with dew.

Chapter 7

1So that morning Gideon (whom people were calling Jerubbaal) got up right away and led all of his soldiers as far as the spring that people would soon call Harod. The army of Midian had camped north of there, in the valley near the hill of Moreh. **2**Yahweh said to Gideon, “You have too many soldiers with you. Suppose I allow all of you to fight the army of Midian and your army defeats them. Then the Israelites will boast that they defeated their enemies by themselves, without my help. **3**So I want you to make an announcement to the soldiers. Tell them, ‘Any one of you who is too afraid to fight may leave this army camp and go home by way of Mount Gilead.’” When Gideon made that announcement, 22, 000 of the soldiers went home. Only 10, 000 of them stayed in the camp.

4But Yahweh told Gideon, “You still have too many soldiers! Take them down to the spring, and there I will show you which ones to bring. I will tell you which ones to take with you and which ones not to take with you.”

5When Gideon took the men down to the spring, Yahweh told him, “Watch how the men drink. Put in one group the men who scoop up the water with their hands and lick it with their tongues the way dogs do. {Put in another group} the men who kneel down and put their faces in the water to drink.” **6**Now when the soldiers drank, only 300 of them used their hands to bring water to their mouths. All the others drank by kneeling down and putting their faces in the water.

7Then Yahweh told Gideon, “I will use the 300 men who lapped the water from their hands to rescue Israel! I will enable you to defeat the Midianites. All the others may return to their homes.” **8**So the 300 soldiers who were staying with Gideon collected the food that the other men had brought. They also collected the ram’s horns they had brought. Then Gideon sent those other men home, but he kept the 300 soldiers with him.

The army of Midian was camping in the valley below Gideon and his army. **9**The night after all the other soldiers left, Yahweh said to Gideon, “Now is the time for you to attack the Midianites in the valley! You can be confident that I will enable you and your men to defeat them. **10**But if you are afraid to attack the Midiantes, then go secretly to their camp with Purah, your armor-bearer. **11**Listen to what some of the Midianite soldiers are saying. Then you will be very encouraged, and you will be ready to attack their army.” So Gideon took Purah with him and they went secretly to where sentries were guarding the enemy camp. **12**The armies of the people of Midian and Amalek and the desert tribes that were their allies had set up their tents in the valley. They seemed to have as many soldiers as there are locusts in a swarm. It seemed that their camels were too many to count, like the number of grains of sand on the seashore.

13But Gideon and Purah crept close to the edge of the camp. There they heard one man telling a friend about a dream. The man said, “I just had a dream, and in it I saw a round loaf of barley bread rolling down into our Midianite camp. When it reached a tent, it hit it so hard that the tent turned upside down and collapsed!”

14His friend replied, “Your dream can mean only one thing. It means that God is going to enable Gideon son of Joash, that Israelite man, to lead his soldiers to defeat our combined armies from Midian and its allies.”

15When Gideon heard the man tell about his dream and his friend say what it meant, he thanked God {for the victory that the Israelites were going to win}. Then he and Purah returned to the Israelite camp. Gideon shouted to the men, “Now is the time to attack! Yahweh is going to enable us to defeat the Midianite army!” **16**Gideon then divided his 300 soldiers into three groups. He gave each soldier a ram’s horn {to blow as a trumpet}. He also gave each one a torch and an empty clay jar to cover the torch and hide its light.

17Then he said to them, “Watch me! When we come close to the enemy camp, {spread out to surround the camp. Then} do exactly what I do. **18**I will be leading one group of soldiers. As soon as we blow our ram’s horns, you men in the other two groups surrounding the camp must blow your horns too. Then shout, ‘We are Yahweh’s army! We are Gideon’s army!’”

19A new group of guards was just replacing the guards who had been watching the camp since the start of the night. That was when Gideon and the 100 men with him arrived at the edge of the Midianite camp. They suddenly

blew their horns and broke the jars they were carrying. {The torches that had been inside the jars shone brightly.}
20Then the men in all three groups blew their horns and smashed their jars. They held the torches high with their left hands {so that the light would awaken and frighten the Midianites}. They held up the horns with their right hands and alternately blew them and shouted, “We are Yahweh’s army! We are Gideon’s army!” **21**Each of Gideon’s men stayed in position all around the enemy camp. All of the enemy soldiers started running around and sounding the alarm and trying to escape.

22While the 300 Israelite men kept blowing their horns, Yahweh caused the Midianites to start fighting each other with their swords. Some of them killed each other. The others ran away. Some fled south to the town of Beth Shittah. Some fled to the town of Zererah. Others ran away as far as the outskirts of the town of Abel Meholah, near the town of Tabbath. **23**Then Gideon sent messengers to the Israelite men who lived in the territories of the tribes of Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh. The messengers got them to come and help finish defeating the army of Midian. **24**Gideon sent messengers throughout the hilly area where the tribe of Ephraim lived. The messengers told the men there, “Go down and attack the fleeing Midianite soldiers. So that those soldiers do not escape, put guards at the shallow places where people can wade across rivers and streams. Put guards at the crossings of the streams in the area of Beth Barah and the crossings of the Jordan River.” So the men of Ephraim came and put guards in those places.

25They also captured Oreb and Zeeb, the two rulers who were commanding the Midianite army. They found Oreb hiding in a cave in a big rock. They killed him there, and that is why people now call it the Rock of Oreb. They found Zeeb hiding in a pit where people press grapes to make wine. They killed him there, and that is why people now call it the Winepress of Zeeb. The Israelites cut off the heads of Oreb and Zeeb so they could bring them to Gideon. They pursued the Midianites across the Jordan River, and they met Gideon there.

Chapter 8

1Then the soldiers from the tribe of Ephraim told Gideon, “You have not treated us fairly! You should have given us the opportunity to help you fight against the army of Midian!” They argued very angrily with Gideon.

2But Gideon told them, “I have done very little compared with what you have done! It is as if I and my soldiers from the clan of Abiezer and other Israelite tribes harvested a crop of grapes. And it is as if you soldiers from the tribe of Ephraim came along after us and collected the few grapes that we had left on the vines. And it is as if those few grapes you collected were better than the whole crop that we harvested. **3**God enabled you to capture Oreb and Zeeb, the rulers who were commanding the Midianite army. What you did is much more important than what I was able to do!” After Gideon told them that, they were no longer angry with him.

4Then Gideon and his 300 men came to the Jordan River and crossed it. They were very tired, but they continued to chase their enemies. **5**When they arrived at the town of Succoth, Gideon said to the town leaders, “Please give my soldiers something to eat. They are tired and hungry, and we are still trying to capture the Midianite kings, Zebah and Zalmunna.”

6But the leaders of Succoth replied, “You have not caught Zebah and Zalmunna yet! So we are not going to give your troops anything to eat.”

7Gideon replied, “Because you have refused to give us food, we will return here after Yahweh enables us to capture Zebah and Zalmunna. We are going to make whips out of the stems of thorny desert plants. Then we are going to use them to whip you and cut you!”

8Next Gideon and his 300 men went to the town of Penuel and asked for food there. But the town leaders of Penuel also refused to give them anything to eat. **9**So Gideon told the town leaders of Penuel, “I am going to defeat those kings. Then I will come back here and demolish your tower{, which you think is going to protect you}!”

10By that time, Zebah and Zalmunna had gone to the town of Karkor with 15,000 troops. Those were all who were left of the armies of Midian, Amalek, and the desert tribes that were their allies. Of their fighting men, 120,000 had

already died. **11**Gideon and his men took the road through the wilderness on which caravans travel. This took them east of the villages of Nobah and Jogbehah. The Midianite soldiers were feeling safe out in the wilderness, so Gideon was able to attack them by surprise. **12**When Gideon and his soldiers attacked, the Midianite army panicked and ran away. Zebah and Zalmunna tried to escape, but Gideon and his soldiers chased them. And they captured those two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna.

13After that, Gideon the son of Joash and his men {took Zebah and Zalmunna with them} and started to return home. They went through the Ascent of Heres. **14**Gideon was able to capture a young man who lived in Succoth. Gideon made him tell him who were all the leaders and elders of the town. The young man wrote down the names of all 77 of those men. **15**Then Gideon and his men went into Succoth and said to those leaders, “Here are Zebah and Zalmunna! When we were here before, you made fun of me. You said ‘You have not caught Zebah and Zalmunna yet! So we are not going to give your hungry troops anything to eat.’” **16**Then Gideon and his men grabbed the town leaders. They made whips from the stems of thorny desert plants, and they whipped the town leaders with them. They did that to punish the leaders for not giving them food. **17**Then Gideon and his men went to the town of Penuel. They tore down the tower and killed men in that town.

18Then Gideon said to Zebah and Zalmunna, “You and your soldiers killed some men near Mount Tabor. Tell me about those men.”

They replied, “They looked like you. They all looked like royal princes.”

19Gideon replied, “Those men were my own brothers! I swear by Yahweh that I would spare your lives now if you had spared their lives then.” **20**Then Gideon turned to his oldest son, Jether. He told him, “Now you kill these two kings!” But Jether was still only a boy, so he was afraid. So he did not pull out his sword to kill them.

21Then Zebah and Zalmunna said to Gideon, “Do not ask a boy to do the work that a man should do! You kill us yourself.” So Gideon killed both of them. Then he took the golden crescent-shaped ornaments that their camels were wearing.

22Then the soldiers whom Gideon had led into battle told him, “You should be our king! In fact, we want you and your son and your grandson to be our kings. That is because you rescued us from the Midianites who were oppressing us.”

23But Gideon told them, “No, I will not be your king. My son will not be your king either. Yahweh is your real king.” **24**But he added, “There is one thing that I would like you to do for me. Would each of you please give me one earring from the things you captured after the battle?” (The Midianite soldiers were descendants of Ishmael, and it was their custom to wear golden earrings.)

25They replied, “We will each be glad to give an earring to you!” So they spread out a large garment on the ground. Then each man threw a gold earring onto it from the things he had taken from the enemy soldiers he had killed in the battle. **26**The golden earrings that Gideon received weighed a total of over 20 kilograms. That weight did not include some other things that Gideon received. He also received gold, jewels, and luxurious purple robes that the Midianite kings had been wearing and gold chains that had been around their camels’ necks. **27**Gideon used the gold to make a sacred garment. He set it up in his hometown of Ophrah. The people of Israel started going there to worship it, instead of worshiping only Yahweh. Gideon and his family had great trouble because of this.

28So that is the story of how the Israelites defeated the army of Midian. The people of Midian did not become strong enough to attack Israel again. So while Gideon was alive, Israel was a peaceful place for 40 years.

29Then Gideon son of Joash, whom people also called Jerubbaal, went back home to live there. **30**Gideon had many full legal wives, and they bore him 70 sons. **31**Gideon also had a secondary wife in the city of Shechem. She too bore him a son, and Gideon named him Abimelech. **32**Gideon son of Joash lived for a long time. When he died, his family buried his body in the burial ground that his father Joash owned. This was in the town of Ophrah in the territory that belonged to the clan of Abiezer.

33But as soon as Gideon died, the Israelites were unfaithful to Yahweh. They once again worshiped idols that represented gods such as Baal. They made an idol that they called Baal-Berith, and they worshiped it as their god. **34**The enemy nations that surrounded the Israelites had conquered them. Yahweh their God had rescued the Israelites from their control. But they were not grateful for this. **35**Gideon, whom people also called Jerubbaal, had done many good things for the Israelites. But they did not act kindly toward his family.

Chapter 9

1Gideon's son Abimelech went to talk with his mother's brothers in the city of Shechem. He spoke to them and to all his mother's relatives. He said, **2**"I want you to gather all the leaders of Shechem. Tell them, 'It would not be good to have all 70 of Gideon's sons rule over us. It would be better to have only one man, Abimelech, rule over us.' And do not forget that I am a part of your family!"

3So Abimelech's mother's brothers gathered all the leaders of Shechem. They told them everything that Abimelech wanted them to say. The leaders decided to allow Abimelech to rule over them, considering that he was their relative. **4**So the leaders of Shechem took about a kilogram of silver from the temple of their god Baal-Berith and gave it to Abimelech. He used that money to hire some wicked and violent men. They did whatever he told them to do. **5**Abimelech and the men he had hired went to Ophrah, his father's town. There they murdered his 70 brothers, the sons of his father Gideon. They brought each one of them to a huge rock and killed him there. But Gideon's youngest son Jotham escaped because he hid from Abimelech and his men. **6**Then all the town leaders of Shechem and the officers from the nearby fort gathered next to the pillar under the big sacred tree at Shechem. There they appointed Abimelech to be their king.

7When Jotham heard about that, he climbed high up on Mount Gerizim. From where he was standing, he shouted very loudly to the people below, "You leaders of Shechem, pay attention to what I say, or God will not answer your prayers! **8**One day the trees decided to choose one tree to be their king. First they told the olive tree, 'We would like you to be our king.'

9But the olive tree replied, 'I produce olives, and people make oil from them. They put the oil in sacrifices that they offer, and they use it to anoint people whom they want to honor. It is much more important for me to keep producing olives than to wander around settling matters for other trees as a king would do. {So I will not be your king.}'

10So the trees told the fig tree, 'Then we want you to be our king!'

11But the fig tree replied, 'I produce figs. They are good to eat, and they taste sweet. It is much more important for me to keep producing figs than to wander around settling matters for other trees as a king would do. {So I will not be your king.}'

12So the trees told the grapevine, 'Then we want you to be our king!'

13But the grapevine replied, 'I produce grapes, and people produce new wine from them. That new wine causes gods and people to be happy. It is much more important for me to keep producing grapes than to wander around settling matters for other trees as a king would do. {So I will not be your king.}'

14So all of the trees finally told the thornbush, 'Then we want you to be our king!'

15The thornbush said to the trees, 'If you sincerely want to appoint me to be your king, then accept my protection and obey my commands. But be sure that you are sincere, because if you do not obey me, then I will start a fire that will burn up all of you, even the biggest trees, such as the cedar trees in the country of Lebanon!'"

16After Jotham finished telling them this parable, he said, "Now you must consider whether you have truly done the right thing by making Abimelech your king. You must consider whether you have treated Gideon and his family properly. You must consider whether you have treated him the way he deserved for what he did. **17**Remember

what my father did for you. He led the Israelites into battle against the Midianites. He was willing to die if necessary to rescue you from their power. **18**But now you have rebelled against my father's family. You have murdered 70 of his sons on one huge rock. And you have appointed Abimelech to be the king who will rule you people of Shechem. {You think he will treat you well} because he is your relative. {But he has no right to be a king, since} he is only the son of my father's slave girl, not of one of his full legal wives. **19**Now if you truly have done the right thing toward Gideon and his family, then may you now be happy that Abimelech is your king, and may he also be happy that you are his subjects. **20**But if what you did was not right, then I hope that Abimelech destroys you leaders of Shechem and you officers from the fort, and I hope that you destroy him!"

21After Jotham finished saying all of this, the leaders of Shechem tried to capture him, but he got away from them. He ran away to the town of Beer. He stayed there so that his half-brother Abimelech would not be able to kill him.

22For the next three years, Abimelech ruled as the king of the city of Shechem. Many Israelites also accepted him as their king. **23**Then God made Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem hostile toward each other. The leaders of Shechem started plotting against Abimelech. **24**The 70 sons of Jerubbaal were Abimelech's half-brothers, but he hired men to kill them. The leaders of Shechem gave him the money to have men kill his half-brothers. {So God made them enemies so that} they would suffer violently, just as they had caused others to suffer violently. God did this to punish them for the murders they had committed. **25**The leaders of Shechem decided not to rely on Abimelech anymore. Instead, they had some of their men hide up high on the hills around the city. {From there these men could see travelers approaching, and they surprised them} and robbed them when they got close. Abimelech heard about what they were doing.

26Then Gaal son of Ebed moved into the city of Shechem along with a group of men he commanded. The leaders of Shechem liked him and welcomed him. **27**Then the people who lived in Shechem went out to their vineyards to pick some grapes. They pressed the grapes to make juice, and from the juice they made wine. They brought some of the wine as an offering into the temple of their god Baal-Berith. There they had a big feast and drank a lot of wine. Then they started cursing Abimelech. **28**Gaal son of Ebed said, "We should not allow Abimelech to rule over us! His mother was from Shechem, but his father was Jerubbaal{, an Israelite}. So he is not really part of our people group! {We should not allow} Zebul {to rule over us either, since} it was Abimelech who appointed him as governor of our city. Instead, our ruler should be one of the descendants of Hamor, who founded our city of Shechem. We should not be allowing a foreigner like Abimelech to rule us. **29**If you appoint me to be your leader, I will make Abimelech stop being your leader." Then Gaal boasted that he would not be afraid to fight Abimelech and his whole army.

30When Zebul, the governor of Shechem, heard Gaal son of Ebed talking {about Abimelech} this way, he became very angry. **31**But Zebul did not show that he was angry. He sent messengers to warn Abimelech, but he pretended he was sending them for some other reason. The messengers told Abimelech, "Be careful! A certain man, Gaal son of Ebed, has brought a group of men that he commands to Shechem. You need to know that they are getting the people who live in Shechem to rebel against you. **32**So you and your troops should come here at night{, when no one will see you,} and hide in the area outside the city. **33**That way, in the morning, as soon as it becomes light, you can immediately attack the city. Gaal and his men will surely come out of the city to fight against you, and when they do, you can do whatever you want to him."

34So Abimelech and all of his troops got up during the night. They divided into four groups and hid in the fields near Shechem. **35**{The next morning,} Gaal went out and stood at the city gate. {While he was standing there,} Abimelech and his soldiers came out of their hiding places and started coming toward him.

36When Gaal saw the soldiers, he said to Zebul, "Look! There is a group of people coming down from the hills!"

But Zebul said, "You are just seeing the shadow that one hill casts on another as the sun gets higher in the sky. That dark shape is not a group of people. It only looks like one." **37**But Gaal {kept watching and} spoke again. He said to Zebul, "Look! I do see groups of people coming down that central hill! I also see a group coming towards us along the road that goes past the Oak of the Diviners."

38Then Zebul said to Gaal, “Earlier you spoke boastfully. You said, ‘We should not allow Abimelech to rule over us!’
That is who you see coming: the army that you said you could easily defeat. So now that they are here, go out and
fight them!”

39So Gaal and his men went out of the city and fought against the army of Abimelech. The leaders of Shechem
were watching {to see what would happen}. **40**Abimelech and his men {defeated them and} chased them when
they ran away. They stabbed and killed many of Gaal’s men all the way back to the city gate of Shechem.
41Abimelech then went to the nearby town of Arumah. Zebul forced Gaal and the group of men he commanded to
leave Shechem, where they had been living.

42Then, the next day, the people of Shechem were getting ready to leave the city and go out and work in their
fields. Someone told Abimelech what they were going to do. **43**So Abimelech divided his men into three groups and
had them hide in the fields around Shechem. Then, once they saw that the people were out in the fields away from
the city, they got up and attacked them. **44**When Abimelech and his soldiers came out of hiding, he and one group
of them ran to the city gate {and blocked it}. The other two groups of soldiers ran out to the fields and killed the
people of Shechem who were there. **45**Abimelech and his soldiers fought against the people of Shechem all that
day. When they finally conquered the city, they killed all the people who lived there. They tore down all of the
buildings. Then they threw salt over the ruins to show that they never wanted anyone to live there again.

46A group of soldiers lived in a fortress near Shechem that had a defensive tower. When their commanders heard
what had happened, all of them went inside the fortress, which was also a temple of their god El-Berith.
47Somebody told Abimelech that the commanders of the fortress near Shechem had all gone inside it. **48**So
Abimelech and all of his soldiers went onto the slopes of {nearby} Mount Zalmon. They brought axes with them.
Abimelech cut a large branch from a tree and put it on his shoulder. He told all of his soldiers, “Quickly, all of you
cut branches as you just saw me do!” **49**So each one of the soldiers also cut a branch, {and they carried them down
the mountain,} following Abimelech. They went to the fortress and piled the branches against its walls. Then they
set the branches on fire. About 1,000 men and women were inside the tower near Shechem. The fire burned up the
fortress and killed all of them too.

50After that, Abimelech and his soldiers went to the town of Thebez{, whose people had also rebelled against him}.
They surrounded it and conquered it. **51**But the people of that city had built a tower where they would be safe if
someone attacked them. Many men and women from the city, including its leaders, ran to the tower. Once they
were inside, they locked the door. Then they climbed up to the roof of the tower. **52**Abimelech and his soldiers came
to the tower to try to kill the people who were in it. Abimelech went right up to the tower to start a fire that would
burn it down. **53**But when Abimelech came near the tower, a woman who was on the roof dropped a large grinding
stone on his head. It cracked the bone of his skull.

54The servant who was carrying Abimelech’s weapons was nearby. Abimelech quickly ordered him, “Pull out your
sword and kill me with it! I do not want people to say about me, ‘A woman killed Abimelech.’” So the servant
stabbed Abimelech with his sword, and that killed him. **55**When the Israelite soldiers saw that Abimelech was dead,
they all returned to their homes.

56In that way, God punished Abimelech for murdering all 70 of his brothers. When Abimelech did that, he did a
wicked thing to his father. **57**God also punished the people of Shechem for all the wicked things that they had done.
Jotham son of Gideon had said that Abimelech would destroy them, and that is what happened.

Chapter 10

1After Abimelech died, Tola, the son of Puah and grandson of Dodo became a leader. He rescued the Israelites from
their enemies. He belonged to the tribe of Issachar. However, he lived in the town of Shamir in the hilly area where
the descendants of Ephraim live. **2**Tola was the leader of the Israelites for 23 years. When he died, his family buried
him in Shamir.

3After Tola died, Jair from the region of Gilead became a leader. He was the leader of the Israelites for 22 years. **4**He had 30 sons, and he gave each of them his own donkey to ride on. They lived in 30 cities in the region of Gilead. People still call those cities Havvoth Jair. **5**When Jair died, his family buried him in the town of Kamon.

6Once again the Israelites did things that Yahweh said were very wicked. They worshiped various idols that represented gods such as Baal. They also worshiped female fertility goddesses such as Ashtoreth. They also worshiped the gods that people worshiped in the countries of Aram and Moab and in the city of Sidon. And they worshiped the gods that the Ammonite and Philistine people groups worshiped. But they did not worship Yahweh at all anymore. **7**So Yahweh became very angry with the Israelites, and he allowed the Philistines and Ammonites to conquer them. **8**For 18 years, the Amorites had already been oppressing all the people of Israel who lived in the area east of the Jordan River. That land formerly belonged to the Amorites. (People also call it Gilead.) But now they began to oppress all of the Israelites severely. **9**The Ammonites crossed over the Jordan River and also fought against the people of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim. They made the Israelites suffer terribly. **10**So the Israelites prayed desperately to Yahweh. They said, “We have sinned against you. We have stopped worshiping you, and instead we have been worshiping idols representing false gods such as Baal.”

11Yahweh answered them, saying, “{In the past,} the Egyptians, Amorites, Ammonites, Philistines, **12**Sidonians, Amalekites, and Maonites were treating you badly. You prayed desperately to me, and I rescued you from them. **13**But even after that, you stopped worshiping me. You worshiped other gods instead. So I am not going to keep rescuing you. **14**See whether the gods you are worshiping can rescue you now that you are in trouble again!”

15But the people of Israel said to Yahweh, “We confess that we have sinned. Punish us in whatever way you wish. But please rescue us now!” **16**Then the Israelites threw away the idols that represented the foreign gods they had been worshiping. They worshiped Yahweh instead. Yahweh saw that they were suffering greatly. He felt compassion for them and decided to help them.

17Soldiers from the Ammonite people group gathered {to fight against the Israelites}. They set up their tents in the region of Gilead. So the Israelite soldiers gathered {to fight against them}. They set up their tents near the city of Mizpah. **18**The leaders of the people of Gilead said to each other, “Who will lead our attack against the Ammonite army? If someone will do that, we will make him the leader of everyone who lives in the region of Gilead.”

Chapter 11

1There was a man from the region of Gilead whose name was Jephthah. He was a great soldier. But his mother was a prostitute. His father was a man whose name was Gilead. **2**Gilead also had a legal wife who gave birth to several sons. When they became adults, they forced Jephthah to leave. They told him, “You are not the son of our father’s legal wife, so you have no right to inherit any of his property.” **3**So Jephthah ran away from his brothers. He settled in the region of Tob. He attracted a group of lawless men, and they went out raiding together.

4Some time later, the soldiers of the Ammon people group attacked the people of Israel. **5**The Israelites needed someone to lead their soldiers to fight against the Ammonites. So the leaders of the region of Gilead went to the land of Tob. They wanted to bring Jephthah back {to be their commander}. **6**They said to him, “Come back with us and lead our army. That way we will be able to defeat the Ammonite army.”

7But Jephthah told the leaders of Gilead, “You rejected me! You let my brothers force me to leave home {without any inheritance}! So you should not come and expect me to help you now that you are in trouble.”

8The leaders of Gilead said to Jephthah, “That is exactly why we are coming to you now{, because we are in trouble}. Come back with us and lead our soldiers against the Ammonite army. If you do, we will make you the leader over everyone who lives in Gilead.”

9Jephthah answered them, “So if I go back to Gilead with you to fight against the army of Ammon, and if Yahweh helps us to defeat them, then I will be your leader.”

10The leaders of Gilead told Jephthah, “We swear that we will do what you have just described. Yahweh is a witness
of the promises we are making to you. May he punish us if we do not keep those promises!” **11**So Jephthah went
with the leaders back to Gilead. {In a religious gathering} at Mizpah, Jephthah repeated to Yahweh the terms of the
agreement they had made. Then the people appointed him to be their leader and the commander of their army.

12Jephthah sent messengers to the king of the Ammon people group. They asked the king, “What have we done to
make you angry, so that your army has invaded our land to fight against us?”

13The Ammonite king replied to Jephthah’s messengers, “I am invading because you Israelites took our land when
you came here from Egypt. You took all of our land east of the Jordan River, from the Arnon River in the south to
the Jabbok River in the north. So now give it back to us without a fight.”

14But Jephthah sent his messengers back to the Ammonite king. **15**They said to him, “Jephthah told us to tell you:
‘Israel did not take any land that belonged to the Moabites or the Ammonites. **16**Here is what actually happened.
When the Israelite people came out of Egypt, they walked through the desert to the Sea of Reeds. From there they
traveled to the town of Kadesh {at the border of the region of Edom}. **17**From there the Israelites sent messengers
to the king of the Edom people group. They asked him, “Please allow us to walk across your land.” But the king of
the Edomites refused. When they sent the same message to the king of the Moabites, he also refused to allow
them to go through his land. So the Israelites stayed at Kadesh for a long time. **18**Then the Israelites went into the
desert and walked outside the borders of Edom and Moab. They stayed to the east of Moab, and they did not set
up their camp until they were north of the Arnon River. That means that they never went into the territory of Moab,
since the Arnon River is the {northern} border of Moab.

19Then the leaders of Israel sent a message to the king of the Amorite people group. His name was Sihon. He ruled
in the city of Heshbon. They asked him, “Please allow us Israelite people to cross through your land so we may go
into the land that is ours.” **20**But Sihon thought that if he allowed the Israelites to come into his land, they would try
to conquer it. So he gathered his whole army. His soldiers set up their tents at the town of Jahaz. From there, they
attacked the Israelite people. **21**But Yahweh, the God of Israel, made the Israelite army stronger than the army of
Sihon. So the Israelites destroyed that enemy army. Then they took possession of all the land where those
Amorites had lived. **22**Yes, the Israelites took all the land that belonged to those Amorites. It extended from the
Arnon River in the south to the Jabbok River in the north, and from the desert in the east to the Jordan River in the
west.

23So it was Yahweh, the God of Israel, who forced the Amorites to leave the land in which they were living. Yahweh
allowed the Israelites to live there instead. So you cannot claim that land as if it belonged to you. **24**You have the
right to live in any land that your god Chemosh may give to you. But Yahweh our God forced others to leave this
entire land so that we could live in it. And we are going to keep living in it! **25**You are not greater than Balak son of
Zippor, the king of Moab. He never disputed that this land now belonged to the Israelites. He never fought against
the Israelites to try to take the land from them{, even though it once belonged to the Moabites and Ammonites}.
26The Israelites have been living for the past 300 years in the city of Heshbon and the town of Aroer and in the
villages around them. They have also been living in settlements along the Arnon River. But during all of that time,
you Ammonites have not tried to capture those areas for yourselves. **27**So we Israelites have not harmed you {by
taking any land from you}. But you Ammonites are doing something bad to us by attacking us {to try to conquer
our land}. Yahweh {our God} makes sure that people treat each other properly. If we fight, he will enable our
Israelite army to defeat your Ammonite army, because we have done what is right and you are doing what is
wrong.’”

28But even though Jephthah sent him this message, the king of Ammon did not command his army to stop fighting
against the Israelites.

29Then the Spirit of Yahweh gave Jephthah special strength and courage. He went through the region of Gilead and
through the area east of the Jordan River where the tribe of Manasseh lived {to enlist men for his army}. He
brought all those soldiers to the city of Mizpah in Gilead{, where some of the Israelites had already gathered}. From
there, they would go to fight against the Ammonites. **30**There Jephthah made a solemn promise to Yahweh. He

said, “If you will enable my army to defeat the Ammonites, **31**when I return safely from defeating the Ammonites,
then I will devote to you the first person who comes out of my house to greet me. I will sacrifice that person by
burning him up completely on an altar.”

32Then Jephthah and his soldiers went from Mizpah to attack the Ammonites. Yahweh enabled his army to defeat
them. **33**Jephthah and his men defeated the Ammonites at the town of Aroer. Then they pursued them all the way
to the area around the city of Minnith. They destroyed 20 settlements, as far as the city of Abel Keramim. The
Israelites killed a very great number of Ammonites. After that the Ammonites could no longer oppose the
Israelites.

34When Jephthah returned to his home in Mizpah, his daughter was the first one to come out of the house to meet
him. She was joyfully playing a tambourine and dancing. Since he had no other sons or daughters, she was his only
child. **35**When Jephthah saw his daughter, he tore his clothes to show that he was very sad about what he thought
he had to do. He said to her, “Oh, no! My daughter, you have made me terribly distressed {by being the first one to
greet me}. You are troubling me just as the Ammonites did. I made a solemn promise to Yahweh {to sacrifice the
first person who came out of my house}, and I have to do what I promised.”

36His daughter said, “Father, you made a solemn promise to Yahweh. So you must do to me what you promised,
because you said that you would do that if Yahweh helped you to defeat your enemies, the Ammonites.” **37**But then
she asked him, “Please do something for me first. Do not offer me as a sacrifice right away. Let me go into the hills
and wander around with my friends for two months. Let me grieve with them the fact that I will never get married
and have children.”

38Jephthah told her, “You may go.” And he let her leave for two months. So she and her friends wandered in the
hills, and they all cried for her because she would never get married and have children. **39**After two months, she
returned to her father Jephthah, and he did to her what he had solemnly promised. So his daughter never married.

Because of that, the Israelites now have a custom. **40**The young Israelite women go into the hills for four days each
year. There they sadly remember what happened to the daughter of Jephthah from the region of Gilead.

Chapter 12

1The men of the tribe of Ephraim got ready for battle. They crossed the Jordan River and went northeast to where
Jephthah was. They said to Jephthah, “You should not have gone to fight the Ammonites without asking us to help
you. We will burn down your house with you inside it!”

2Jephthah replied to them, “My people and I were in a big fight with the Ammonites. I called for you to help me
against them, but you did not come. **3**When I saw that you would not help me, I risked my own life and led my men
against the Ammonites. Yahweh helped me defeat them. So you should not have come to fight against me today!”

4The Ephraimites insulted the Gileadites. They said, “You Gileadites are just runaway people from Ephraim. You live
between Ephraim and Manasseh.” {Because the Ephraimites insulted them,} Jephthah gathered all the men of
Gilead. They fought against the men of Ephraim and defeated them. **5**The men of Gilead blocked the places where
people could cross the Jordan River. They did this to stop the Ephraimites from escaping. Some of the soldiers from
Ephraim tried to cross the river. The men of Gilead asked everyone who wanted to cross, “Are you from the tribe of
Ephraim?” If a man said “No,” **6**the men of Gilead would tell him, “Say the word ‘Shibboleth.’” The Ephraimites could
not pronounce that word correctly. They would say “Sibboleth” instead. When they said that, the men of Gilead
knew they were from Ephraim. Then they would catch them and kill them at the river crossing. At that time they
killed 42,000 people from the tribe of Ephraim. **7**Jephthah, who came from the region of Gilead, led the people of
Israel for six years. Then he died. People buried him in one of the towns of Gilead.

8After Jephthah died, a man whose name was Ibzan became the next leader of Israel. Ibzan was from the town of
Bethlehem. **9**Ibzan had 30 sons and 30 daughters. He let all his daughters marry men from other clans. He brought

in 30 young women from other clans to marry his sons. Ibzan led Israel for seven years. **10**Then Ibzan died, and people buried him in the town of Bethlehem.

11After Ibzan died, a man whose name was Elon became the next leader of Israel. Elon was from the tribe of Zebulun. He led Israel for ten years. **12**Then Elon the Zebulunite died. People buried him in the town of Aijalon. That town was in the territory that belonged to the tribe of Zebulun.

13After Elon died, a man whose name was Abdon became the next leader of Israel. Abdon was the son of Hillel. He came from the town of Pirathon. **14**Abdon had 40 sons and 30 grandsons. He was rich enough to buy donkeys for all of them to ride. Abdon led Israel for eight years. **15**Then Abdon son of Hillel died, and people buried him in his home town of Pirathon. This town was in the territory that belonged to the tribe of Ephraim. It was in the hill country where the Amalekite people used to live.

Chapter 13

1The Israelites again did what Yahweh had said was wicked. So Yahweh allowed the Philistines to rule over them for 40 years.

2There was a man whose name was Manoah who lived in the town of Zorah. He belonged to the tribe of Dan. His wife could not have children. **3**One day, an angel representing Yahweh appeared to Manoah's wife. The angel told her, "Please pay attention to this. You have not been able to have children. But you will soon become pregnant and have a son. **4**Please make sure that from now until he is born, you do not drink any wine or beer. Also, do not eat any food that God has said is unclean. **5**You must do this because you are going to become pregnant and have a son {who must not drink or eat these things}. You must dedicate him to God as a Nazirite as soon as you give birth to him. Therefore you must never cut his hair. He will begin to stop the Philistines from ruling the Israelites."

6The woman ran and told her husband, "A man from God came to me. He looked like an angel from God. Looking at him made me afraid. I did not ask where he came from, and he did not tell me his name. **7**But he told me, 'Pay attention to this. You will become pregnant and have a son. From now until he is born, do not drink any wine or beer. Do not eat any food that God has said is unclean. You must do this because you are to dedicate your son to God as a Nazirite as soon as you give birth to him. He must continue to be a Nazirite for his entire life.'"

8Then Manoah prayed to Yahweh, "Please, Lord, let the man you sent who looked like an angel come back to us. We want him to teach us how to raise the son my wife will have."

9God did what Manoah asked. The angel representing God came again to the woman while she was out working in the field. But her husband Manoah was not with her. **10**The woman ran quickly and told her husband, "Listen to this! The man who appeared to me the other day has come back!"

11Manoah went out with his wife right away. When he came to the man, he asked him, "Are you the one who talked to my wife?" The man replied, "Yes, I am."

12Manoah asked him, "When what you have said comes true, what rules should the boy follow? What work should he do?"

13The angel representing Yahweh said to Manoah, "Your wife must be careful to do everything I told her. **14**She must not eat any grapes or raisins or drink grape juice. She must not drink any wine or beer. And she must not eat any food that God has said is unclean. She must obey everything I have told her."

15Manoah said to the angel, "Please stay here for a while. We would like to prepare a young goat for you to eat."

16The angel replied, "All right, I will stay, but I will not eat a meal. If you want to prepare something, you should offer it as a burnt offering to Yahweh." Now Manoah did not realize that this was an angel representing Yahweh.

17Then Manoah asked the angel, “What is your name? We want to honor you when what you have said comes true.”

18The angel told him, “You should not ask me my name. It is a mysterious name that I do not tell other people.”
19Then Manoah took a young goat and a grain offering and offered them on a rock to Yahweh. As Manoah and his wife were watching, the angel did something amazing. **20**As the flame went up from the altar toward the sky, the angel went up in the flame. When Manoah and his wife saw this, they knelt down and put their faces to the ground {as an act of humble worship}. **21**The angel did not appear to Manoah and his wife again. Then Manoah realized that the angel had been representing Yahweh.

22Manoah said to his wife, “We have seen God, so we are going to die!”

23But his wife said to him, “If Yahweh had wanted to kill us, he would not have accepted our burnt offering and grain offering {to show that he is pleased with us}. He also would not have done this remarkable sign for us. And he would not have told us that we were going to have a baby even before I conceived him and gave birth to him.”

24Then the woman did have a son{, just as the angel had said}. She named him Samson. As the boy was growing up, Yahweh did good things for him {to show that he was going to use him to help the Israelites}. **25**Samson went to live in the town of Mahaneh Dan, between the towns of Zorah and Eshtaol. There the Spirit of Yahweh began to make him want to stop the Philistines from ruling the Israelites.

Chapter 14

1Samson went to the town of Timnah. There he saw a young Philistine woman. **2**Samson went back home and told his parents, “I saw a young Philistine woman in Timnah. I want you to arrange for me to marry her.”

3His parents said to him, “There are many young women in our own tribe of Dan and among our people of Israel. You can marry one of them. You should not marry someone from a people group that does not worship Yahweh.”

But Samson told his father, “No, I like her very much, and so I want you to arrange for me to marry her.” **4**His parents did not know that Yahweh wanted this to happen. Yahweh was looking for a way to act against the Philistines because they were oppressing Israel at that time. **5**Samson went to Timnah with his parents. As they came near the vineyards of Timnah, suddenly a young lion attacked Samson {as he was walking alone}. **6**The Spirit of Yahweh gave Samson great strength. He ripped the lion apart with his bare hands as easily as if it had been a young goat. But he did not tell his parents what he had done. **7**When they arrived in Timnah, Samson talked with the young woman, and he liked her very much. {So his father made arrangements for the wedding.}

8Later, Samson went back to marry her. On the way, he went to look at the dead lion. He saw that a swarm of bees had made a nest in the lion’s body and produced some honey. **9**Samson scooped out some of the honey with his hands. He ate some as he walked along. When he came to his parents, he gave them some, and they ate it too. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey from the lion’s body.

10Samson’s father went to arrange the marriage with the woman’s family. Samson gave a feast for the young men in that area. That was what young men did when they married someone. **11**The family of the woman saw that Samson had not brought any other young men with him. So they had 30 of their own young men accompany him at the feast.

12Samson said to them, “Let me tell you a riddle. If you can answer it during the seven days of the feast, I will give you 30 linen garments and 30 changes of clothes. **13**But if you can not answer it, then you must give me 30 linen garments and 30 changes of clothes.” They told him, “{We agree.} Tell us your riddle, and we will try to solve it.”

14He said to them,

“Something to eat came out of something that eats.

Something sweet came out of something strong."

They tried for three days to solve the riddle, but they could not.

15On the last day of the feast, they said to Samson's bride, "Get the answer to the riddle for us from your bridegroom. If you do not, we will burn you and your family to death. We did not come to this feast to become poor!"

16So Samson's bride went to him and started crying. She shouted, "You hate me! You do not love me! You told a riddle to my relatives, but you did not tell me the answer."

Samson said to her, "I have not even told the answer to my parents. So I am not going to tell you." **17**But she kept crying for the rest of the feast. Finally, as it was about to end, he told her the answer to the riddle because she had kept bothering him. She went and told the answer to the Philistine young men.

18Before sunset on the last day of the feast, the Philistine guests said to Samson,

"The sweet thing was honey,

and the strong thing was a lion!"

Samson said to them, "You must have gotten the answer from my bride! Otherwise, you could not have solved my riddle!"

19Then the Spirit of Yahweh gave Samson great strength. He went to the city of Ashkelon and killed 30 men there. He took their clothes and gave them to the men who had answered his riddle. But he was very angry about what had happened. He went back to his father's house without marrying the woman. **20**So her father had her marry instead the Philistine young man who had been a special helper to Samson at the wedding feast.

Chapter 15

1Some time later, during the wheat harvest, Samson visited the woman he was supposed to marry. He brought a young goat as a gift. He told her father that he wanted to sleep with her {to make their marriage official}. But her father would not let him do that.

2Her father told him, "I honestly thought that you hated her. So I had her marry the young man who was your helper at the wedding feast. But her younger sister is even prettier. You can marry her instead."

3Samson refused, and he said to everyone who was listening, "Now I have a good reason to hurt the Philistines!" **4**Then Samson went out into the fields and caught 300 foxes. He tied their tails together in pairs. He got some torches, and he put a torch between each pair of tails. **5**He lit the torches and let the foxes run through the Philistines' fields. The fire burned the grain they had harvested and the grain that was still in the fields. It also burned their olive trees.

6The Philistine leaders asked, "Who did this?" Someone told them, "Samson did it. He was supposed to marry the daughter of a man who lived in the town of Timnah. But that man had his daughter marry Samson's best man instead." In revenge, the Philistines went and killed Samson's fiancée and her father by burning them.

7Samson found out that they had done that. He told them, "Because you killed my bride and her father, I am going to avenge their deaths. But I will do no more than that." **8**Samson attacked the Philistines furiously and killed many of them. Then he went and hid in a cave in the rock of Etam.

9Then many Philistine soldiers came and set up camp in the territory of Judah. There were so many of them that their camp covered a large area near the town that people later called Lehi. **10**The men of Judah asked them, "Why have you come to fight us?"

The Philistines answered, “We have come to capture Samson. He killed many of us, and so we are going to kill him.”

11Then 3,000 men from Judah went to the cave in the rock of Etam where Samson was hiding. They said to Samson, “The Philistines rule over us. You should have known not to upset them. You have caused much trouble for us.”

Samson answered, “They killed my fiancée and her father, so I killed some of them.”

12The men of Judah told Samson, “We have come to tie you up. We are going to give you to the Philistines.”

Samson said to them, “Promise me that you will not kill me yourselves.”

13They answered, “We will only tie you up and give you to the Philistines. We will not kill you.” So they tied him with two new ropes and led him away from the rock. **14**When Samson came to the town of Lehi, the Philistines came toward him shouting. Then the Spirit of Yahweh gave Samson great strength. His arms became so strong that he was able to break the rope around them as if it were weak thread. He also easily broke the rope that was around his hands. **15**Then Samson saw a donkey’s jawbone lying on the ground. It was new, so it was hard. He picked it up and used it to kill 1,000 men. **16**Then Samson made up this poem:

“With a donkey’s jawbone,

I have made piles of bodies.

With a donkey’s jawbone,

I have killed 1,000 men.”

17After Samson finished speaking, he threw away the jawbone. He named that place Ramath Lehi.

18Samson was very thirsty. He called out to Yahweh, “You have given me this great victory. But now I am afraid that I will die of thirst. Then the Philistines, who do not worship you, will take my body and treat it shamefully!” **19**Then God split open a hollow place in Lehi. Water came out of it. When Samson drank some of that water, he felt strong again. So he named that spring En Hakkore. It is still in Lehi today.

20Samson was the leader of Israel for 20 years. But during that time, the Philistines were in control of the land of Israel.

Chapter 16

1Samson later went to the city of Gaza. He saw a prostitute there, and he had sexual relations with her {and then stayed in her room}. **2**People told the leaders of the Gazites, “Samson has come inside our city!” So the leaders sent men to surround the place where Samson was. They waited there secretly all night. The leaders also put guards at the city gate. But they did not try to capture Samson that night. They decided that once day came, {they would be able to see clearly} to catch him and kill him. **3**But Samson did not stay where he was all night. At midnight, he got up. He went to the city gate {to leave the city, but he found that it was barred shut}. So he lifted the entire gate up out of the ground, the doors and their posts and the bar. He carried all of this on his shoulders uphill {for many miles,} all the way to the top of the hill near the town of Hebron. **4**Later Samson fell in love with a woman who lived in the Valley of Sorek. Her name was Delilah. **5**The Philistine leaders came to her and said, “See if you can get Samson to tell you what makes him so strong. See if you can find out how we can capture him and tie him up so that he cannot get away. If you do that, each of us will give you 1,100 pieces of silver.” **6**So Delilah told Samson, “I want you to explain to me what makes you so strong. Tell me how anyone could ever tie you up to capture you.” **7**Samson replied, “If someone ties me with seven new bowstrings, ones that are not dry yet, I will have only the strength of an ordinary person.” **8**So {Delilah told this to the Philistine leaders, and} they brought her seven new bowstrings. {When Samson fell asleep,} she used them to tie him up. **9**Some men were hiding in one of the other rooms in her house {to capture Samson when they were sure that the bowstrings would restrain him}. Delilah

called out, “Samson! The Philistines have come here to capture you!” But Samson {woke up and} snapped the bowstrings as easily as fire burns through string. So the Philistines did not find out what made Samson so strong.
10Then Delilah said to Samson, “Now listen, you made up a story to trick me! Now tell me how someone can really tie you up securely.” **11**Samson replied, “If someone actually ties me up with new ropes, ones that no one has used for anything else, then I will have only the strength of an ordinary person.” **12**So Delilah {once again told the Philistine leaders what Samson had said. She} got some new ropes, and she had men hide in one of the rooms in her house. {When Samson fell asleep,} she tied him up with the ropes. Then she called out, “Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!” But Samson {woke up and} snapped the ropes off his arms as easily as if they had been threads. **13**Then Delilah told Samson, “You made up another story to trick me! Now tell me how someone can really tie you up securely.” Samson replied, “You have a loom here with threads going in one direction. If you weave the seven braids of my hair into those threads in the other direction, {as if you were making fabric,} then I will have only the strength of an ordinary person.” **14**So Delilah {once again told the Philistine leaders what Samson had said, and she had men hide in one of the rooms in her house. Then she} used a shuttle to weave the seven braids of Samson’s hair in and out of the threads she had on her loom. Then she called out, “Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!” When Samson woke up, his hair was still in the shuttle. But he pulled it right out of the threads on the loom. **15**After this, Delilah said to him, “You say that you love me, but I do not believe that you do, because you have not told me the truth about yourself. You have tricked me three times and you have not really told me what makes you so strong!” **16**Day after day she nagged him relentlessly to tell her his secret. He felt as if he was going to die from her nagging. **17**So finally Samson told her the whole truth. He told her, “My parents dedicated me to God as a Nazirite on the day I was born. Because of that, no one has ever cut my hair. If someone did shave the hair off my head, then I would lose my great strength. I would have only the strength of an ordinary person.” **18**Delilah realized that this time he had told her the whole truth. So she sent someone to get the Philistine leaders. She told them, “Come back one more time, because Samson has finally told me the secret of his strength.” So the Philistine leaders came back to her house and brought the money they had promised to give her. **19**Then she got Samson to fall deeply asleep. Then she called one of the Philistine men to come and cut off Samson’s hair. This would enable the Philistines to capture him, because he would lose his great strength. **20**Then she called out, “Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!”

He woke up and thought, “I will be able to do whatever I need to do to get away from them, just as I did the other times!” But he did not realize that Yahweh was no longer helping him. **21**Instead, the Philistine men captured him. They blinded him by gouging out both of his eyes {so that he could no longer attack any of them}. Then they took him to Gaza. They put him in prison there and put bronze chains on him {so he could not escape}. They made him turn a large millstone to grind grain every day. **22**But his hair started to grow again after the man had cut it. **23**Then the Philistine leaders had a big celebration. They offered many sacrifices to their god Dagon. They praised him, saying, “Our god has enabled us to capture Samson, who did so many things to harm us!” **24**When the other people at the festival saw Samson, they also praised their god Dagon, saying, “Samson harmed us greatly. He killed many of our soldiers and ruined many of our crops, but our god Dagon has enabled us to capture him!” **25**The people drank a lot of wine and began to become drunk. Then they shouted, “Get Samson out of the prison! Bring him here so we can ridicule him!”

So they brought Samson from the prison and made him stand {in the center of the temple,} between the pillars that supported the roof. The people ridiculed him. **26**Samson said to the servant who was leading him by the hand {because he was blind}, “I want to rest. Place my hands against the two pillars that support the roof so that I can lean against them.” **27**All the Philistine leaders were in the temple, along with a great crowd of men and women. There were about 3, 000 people on the roof, looking at Samson and ridiculing him. **28**Samson prayed to Yahweh and said, “Lord Yahweh, please think about me again! Please, God, give me strength just once more so that I can take revenge on the Philistines for gouging out my eyes!” **29**Then Samson put his right hand on one of the central pillars of the temple, and he put his left hand on the other one. He pushed hard against both pillars. **30**Then Samson shouted, “I am going to kill all these Philistines, even though I have to die myself!” He pushed on the pillars as hard as he could, and he broke them and the temple collapsed. This killed the Philistine leaders and all the other people who were in the temple. So Samson killed more people when he died than he had killed while he was alive.
31Later his brothers and other relatives traveled from Zorah to Gaza to get his body. They took it back home and

buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol, at the place where people had previously buried his father Manoah.
Samson had led Israel for 20 years.

Chapter 17

1There was a man whose name was Micah who lived in the hilly area that belongs to the tribe of Ephraim. **2**One day
he said to his mother, “Someone stole 1, 100 pieces of silver from your house. I heard you ask Yahweh to make bad
things happen to whoever did that. I confess that I took that silver, and I still have it.” His mother replied, “My son,
may Yahweh do good things for you {because you admitted this}!” **3**Micah gave the 1,100 pieces of silver back to
his mother. Then she said, “I am dedicating some of this silver to Yahweh. I am giving it to you, my son, so that you
can have someone mold a figure from it. I will give you enough silver to do that.” **4**When Micah gave the silver
pieces back to his mother, she took 200 of them and gave them to a metal worker. That man made a molded figure
with the silver. Then he gave the figure to Micah. Micah kept it in his home. **5**Micah made a shrine in which he
worshiped idols. He made the kind of vest that priests wear. He also made some small, personal idols. Micah
appointed one of his sons to be his priest at this shrine. **6**At that time, Israel did not have a king, so everyone did
what they thought they should do. **7**There was a young man who had been living in the town of Bethlehem where
people from the tribe of Judah live. He belonged to the tribe of Levi, but he had been living temporarily in the
territory that Joshua had assigned to the tribe of Judah. **8**Then he left Bethlehem to look for another place to live.
As he was looking, he came to Micah’s house in the hilly area that belongs to the tribe of Ephraim. **9**Micah asked
him, “Where are you from?”

He replied, “I have come from Bethlehem in the territory of Judah. I belong to the tribe of Levi, and I am looking for
a new place to live for a while.” **10**Micah told him, “You may live in my house with me. You can advise me and be my
priest. Each year I will give to you ten pieces of silver and some new clothes. I will also provide food for you.” So the
Levite stayed there. **11**The Levite agreed to live with Micah. He became like one of his own sons. **12**Micah appointed
the Levite to be his priest, and he lived on Micah’s property. **13**Then Micah said, “Now I know that Yahweh will do
good things for me, because I have a Levite as my priest.”

Chapter 18

1At that time the Israelites had no king.

And at that time people of the tribe of Dan wanted more land where they could live. The other Israelite tribes had
been able to occupy the territories that their leaders had assigned to them. But the tribe of Dan had not yet been
able to occupy all of their territory. **2**So the Danites chose five strong soldiers from their tribe to look carefully for
more land where they could live. These men lived in the part of their territory that the tribe had been able to
occupy, in the cities of Zorah and Eshtaol. When the tribe sent them out to explore the land, the men went to the
hilly area where the people of the tribe of Ephraim live. They stayed overnight in the area where Micah lived. **3**Since
they were close to his house, they could hear the people there talking. They recognized from the way he spoke that
the young Levite was from the southern part of Israel, as they were. So they went and asked him, “How did you
come here? What are your duties here? How do you support yourself?” **4**He answered, “Let me explain exactly what
Micah has done for me. He has given me the job of being his priest.” **5**So they said to him, “Please ask God to tell us
whether we will succeed in what we are trying to do on this journey.” **6**The young man replied, “You should not
worry. Yahweh will make you successful in what you are trying to do on your journey.” **7**Then the five men left. They
came to the city of Laish, and they saw that the people there were not warlike. Instead, they engaged in trading, as
the people of the city of Sidon do. The people there thought that they were safe. No ruler was controlling them.
Their city was far from Sidon, and they were not part of a defensive league of cities. **8**When those five men returned
to their tribe in Zorah and Eshtaol, the other Danites asked them “What do you have to report?” **9**They replied, “We
have found some land, and we can assure you that it is very good. So we should go and attack the people who live
there. We should not stay here and do nothing. We should go right away and take possession of that land! **10**When

you get there, you will find that the people there are not expecting anyone to attack them. There is plenty of land, and it has everything that we will need. {We should certainly go there,} because God will enable us to conquer that land." **11**So 600 men from the tribe of Dan left Zorah and Eshtaol. They brought their weapons with them {so they could attack the people of Laish}. **12**On their way, they set up their tents near the city of Kiriath Jearim in the area where the tribe of Judah lives. That is why people call the area west of Kiriath Jearim Mahaneh Dan. People still call it that now. **13**From there, they went to the hilly area where the people of the tribe of Ephraim live. And they arrived at Micah's house. **14**The five men who had explored the land near Laish said to their fellow Danites, "We want to inform you that in one of these houses, there is a sacred vest, several household idols, and a silver molded figure. Think about the advantages of having those things for ourselves." **15**So they interrupted their journey and went to the house on Micah's property where the young Levite lived. They told him they hoped he was doing well. **16**The 600 soldiers from the tribe of Dan stood outside the gate to the compound, holding their weapons. **17**The five men who had explored the land went into the house where Micah himself lived. They took the sacred vest, the household idols, and the silver molded figure. They made the priest go out and stand outside the gate with the 600 soldiers who were holding weapons. **18**He saw them bringing out the sacred vest, the household idols, and the silver molded figure from Micah's house. The priest told them it was wrong to take those things. **19**They replied, "Do not object. Just come quietly with us and advise us and be our priest. It is certainly better for you to be the priest for a whole tribe of Israelites than to stay here and be the priest just for one man's family and servants." **20**The priest liked what they were suggesting. So he took the sacred vest, the household idols, and the silver molded figure and he left with the Danites. **21**When they left, the soldiers had their children and cattle walk in front of them. They also had the animals that were carrying their baggage{, including the items they had taken from Micah,} walk in front of them. {That was to protect them from an attack from the rear.} **22**Micah gathered together the men who lived near him and they formed an army. Although the Danites had gotten some distance away by the time they started pursuing them, they were able to catch up with them. **23**Micah and his men shouted at the men of the tribe of Dan. They turned around and asked Micah, "Why have you come after us with this army?" **24**Micah replied, "You took away my own silver idols and my priest! Those were the things I valued the most. So you should not be asking me why I have come after you with an army." **25**The men from the tribe of Dan replied, "You had better not say anything further about this to us. Otherwise some of our men will become angry and attack you, and they would kill you and your relatives and servants!" **26**Then the men from the tribe of Dan continued walking. Micah realized that those soldiers would defeat him and his neighbors if they fought. So he turned around and went home. **27**The men of the tribe of Dan kept Micah's household idols and his priest, and they continued traveling to Laish. They attacked the people who were living there, who had thought that they were safe. They killed all of them, and then they burned everything in the city. **28**There was no group of people to rescue the people of Laish. The city was far from Sidon, so the people who lived there could not help them. And the people of Laish had no other allies. (Laish was in a valley near the town of Beth Rehob.) The people of the tribe of Dan rebuilt the city and lived there themselves. **29**They gave a new name to the city. They called it Dan, in honor of their ancestor whose name was Dan. He was one of Israel's sons. But previously the name of the city had been Laish. **30**The people of the tribe of Dan began to worship the silver molded figure that had belonged to Micah. They appointed Jonathan son of Gershom, the grandson of Moses, to be their priest. His descendants continued to be their priests until the Assyrians captured the Israelites who lived in that area and took them away to other countries. **31**Even though the sacred tent was in Shiloh at this time {and Israelites were supposed to worship there}, the people of the tribe of Dan worshiped the silver molded figure that had belonged to Micah.

Chapter 19

1At that time the Israelites had no king.

There was a Levite who lived in a remote place in the hilly area where the people of the tribe of Ephraim live. He had married a woman as a secondary wife. She was from the city whose name is Bethlehem that is in the area where the tribe of Judah lives. **2**But his secondary wife was unfaithful to him, and then she left him and returned to her father's house in Bethlehem in Judah. She kept living there for four months. **3**Then her husband went to Bethlehem to try to persuade her to live with him again. He brought his servant and two donkeys with him. When

he arrived at her father's house, she invited him to come in. When her father saw him, he was happy that he had come. **4**The woman's father insisted that he stay for a visit. So he stayed there for three days. During that time, he shared meals with his host and slept in his house. **5**On the fourth day, they all got up early in the morning because the Levite wanted to travel back home that day. But his wife's father said to him, "You should really have something to eat before you go {so that you are not hungry on your journey}." **6**So the two men had a meal together. Then the wife's father said to the Levite, "Please agree to stay another night. Relax and have a good time." **7**The Levite wanted to leave, but his wife's father finally persuaded him to stay again that night. **8**On the fifth day, the man got up early and prepared to leave. But the woman's father said to him once again, "You should have something to eat." So the two men once again had a meal together, and they did not finish until the end of the day. **9**Then the Levite got up to leave with his wife and his servant. But the woman's father said, "Please do not leave. See how the sun is getting lower in the sky. See how dark it is getting already. You should stay here tonight and have a good time. Then you can leave on your journey tomorrow morning and get all the way home {in one day}." **10**But the Levite did not want to stay for another night. So he put saddles on his two donkeys and left with his wife {and his servant}. They traveled as far as the city of Jebus, which people now call Jerusalem. **11**It was late in the afternoon by the time they got to Jebus. So the servant said to his master, "I know that the Jebusite people group lives in this city, but I think we need to stop and stay here for the night." **12**But his master told him, "No, it would not be good for us to stay here where foreign people live. There are no Israelite people here. We should go on to the city of Gibeah." **13**He told his servant, "Instead of staying here, we can go a little farther to a city where Israelites live. We could stay for the night in either Gibeah or Ramah." **14**So they continued walking. By the time they reached Gibeah, where people from the tribe of Benjamin live, the sun was setting. **15**So they stopped there in Gibeah to stay for the night. They went into the public square of that city and sat down {as travelers did who were hoping that someone would give them a place to stay}. But no one who went through the square invited them to stay in his house for the night. **16**But then an old man came by. He had been out working in the fields all day. He was from the hilly area where the people of the tribe of Ephraim live. But at that time, he was living in Gibeah. He did not belong to the tribe of Benjamin as most of the people there did. **17**When he saw the Levite in the open area, he realized that he was traveling and did not have a place to stay in that city. So the old man asked him, "Where have you come from? And where are you going?" **18**The Levite replied, "We are returning from Bethlehem in Judah to my home in the hilly area where the people of the tribe of Ephraim live. I went from there to Bethlehem. However, before we return to my home, we are going to the sacred tent {in Shiloh}. No one here has invited us to stay in their house tonight." **19**{But wanting to be polite and not wanting to impose, the Levite continued,} "However, we have straw and grain to feed our donkeys. And I and my wife and our servant have bread and wine to eat and drink. So we do not need anything else." **20**The old man said, "I will take care of you. I will provide you with a place to stay. I do not want you to have to spend the night in the open square." **21**Then the old man took them to his house. He gave food to their donkeys. He gave the man and the woman and the servant water so they could wash the dust from the road off their feet. Then the old man served them a meal. **22**While they were having a good time together, a group of very wicked men from that city surrounded the house and started to bang on the door. They shouted to the old man whose house it was, "Bring out the man who has come to your house! We are all going to rape him!" **23**The old man whose house it was went outside to talk to them. He told them, "Please do not commit such a crime against this man! We are all members of the same community. I have offered this man shelter and safety in my home. You should {respect that and} not do such a terrible thing to him! **24**Listen, I have an unmarried daughter living with me in my home. This man's wife is also here. I will bring them out to you, and you can have sex with them and do whatever you want to them. But do not do such a terrible thing to this man!" **25**But the men did not agree to do what he had said. So the man pushed his wife outside the house where those men were. They forced her to have sex with them. They abused her all night long. At dawn, they finally let her go. **26**The sun was rising when the woman got back to the old man's house, where her husband was staying. But she collapsed at the doorway and remained there until it became light. **27**That morning, her husband got up and unlocked the doors and left the house to continue his journey. But he saw his wife lying there at the doorway of the house. Her hands were on the doorsill. **28**He said to her, "Come on, we can go now." But she did not answer{, because she was dead}. He put her body on one of the donkeys, and he {and his servant} traveled back to his home. **29**When he arrived at his home, he took a knife and cut his wife's body into twelve pieces. Then he sent one piece into the territory of each of the tribes of Israel{, along with a messenger to tell what had happened}. **30**Then everyone who saw a piece of the body {and

heard the message} said, “Nothing like this has happened since our ancestors came here from Egypt! No one has heard of such a terrible thing! We all need to think carefully about this, and people should say what they think we should do in response.”

Chapter 20

1Then many people from throughout Israel traveled to Mizpah so they could meet together there and talk about what to do. They came from as far north as the city of Dan and from as far south as the city of Beersheba. They also came from the region of Gilead east of the Jordan River. They asked Yahweh to be present with them and guide their discussion. **2**The leaders who had come from various tribes of Israel met together with all the other Israelite people. There were 400,000 men there who had learned how to fight well on foot with a sword. **3**The people of the tribe of Benjamin heard that the other Israelites were meeting in Mizpah. But no one from the tribe of Benjamin joined them there.

The other Israelites who had gathered asked to hear how this horrible crime had happened. **4**The Levite whose wife the men of Gibeah had murdered spoke up. He said, “My wife and I were traveling, and we needed a place to stay for the night. We went to the city whose name is Gibeah that is in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin. **5**That evening, a gang of men who seem to be able to do whatever they want in that city surrounded the house where we were staying. They wanted to rape me, and they would have killed me afterwards. {I know that because} they raped my wife all night so that she died. **6**I took her body home and cut it into pieces. Then I sent one piece into the territory of each of the tribes of Israel. I did that because I wanted you all to know about this terrible, wicked thing that those men did right here in Israel. **7**So now, all you Israelites, talk together here and decide what you should do about this!” **8**Then all the people stood up together {to show how resolved they were} and said, “None of us will go back to where we live {until we make sure that those men will be punished}! **9**This is what we must do to the people of Gibeah. First, we will cast lots to choose an army of soldiers to attack them. **10**Then, we will have one tenth of our people get supplies for those soldiers. That way they will have what they need to go to Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin and punish the people who are responsible for doing this terrible thing in the land of Israel.” **11**And all the Israelite people agreed that they had to punish the people of Gibeah. They would all work together to do that. **12**The assembly of Israelites also agreed to send messengers throughout the tribe of Benjamin. They told these messengers to say, “Some of your men have done a very wicked thing in your territory! **13**Those wicked men live in the city of Gibeah. Surrender them to us so that we can execute them. That way we can get rid of the influence that the wicked thing they did is having on the people of Israel.”

But the people of the tribe of Benjamin refused to surrender the men as the other Israelites had demanded. **14**The men who lived in other cities in the territory of Benjamin gathered at Gibeah to defend it against the other Israelites when they attacked. **15**When they did that, a total of 26,000 fighting men came from those cities to fight. Another 700 skilled warriors who lived in Gibeah joined them. **16**Among those soldiers there were 700 skilled warriors who were left-handed. They could all sling stones and hit targets with great accuracy. **17**The people of all the tribes of Israel except Benjamin formed an army of 400,000 men. Those men had learned how to fight with a sword. They were all experienced soldiers. **18**Those other Israelites wanted to ask God for advice. So they went to Bethel {where the sacred chest was at that time}. They asked, “Which tribe’s soldiers should lead the attack when we go and fight against the tribe of Benjamin?”

Yahweh answered, “The soldiers from the tribe of Judah should lead the attack.” **19**So the next morning the Israelite soldiers went and set up a military camp near Gibeah. **20**After that, the Israelite soldiers went to fight against the men from the tribe of Benjamin. They got into positions near Gibeah where they could fight a battle. **21**The soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin came out of Gibeah and fought against them. They killed 22,000 soldiers from Israel in that battle. **22**But the soldiers of Israel did not give up. They got ready to fight the next day in the same battle lines as on the first day. **23**Some of them had gone {to Bethel} and mourned in Yahweh’s presence until the end of that day. They had asked Yahweh what they should do. They had said, “Should we fight another battle with the soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin, even though they are Israelites just as we are?” Yahweh had answered, “Yes, attack

them!" **24**So the next day the Israelite soldiers once again advanced against the Benjaminite army. **25**The soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin came out from Gibeah to fight another battle. They attacked them, and they killed 18,000 more Israelite soldiers who had all learned how to fight well with a sword. **26**That afternoon, the soldiers who had survived went to Bethel. All the other Israelites who had come to support the army went with them. They sat there in Yahweh's presence and mourned. They ate nothing that day until the sun set. At the sacred tent the priests made sacrifices for them that they burned completely on the altar, and they also made fellowship sacrifices. **27**The people of Israel asked Yahweh to guide them. The sacred chest of God was in Bethel at that time. **28**Phinehas son of Eleazar, the grandson of Aaron, was serving as the high priest at the sacred tent at that time. The Israelites asked, "Should we fight another battle with the soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin, even though they are Israelites just as we are? Or should we not fight any more battles?" Yahweh said, "Attack them, because tomorrow I will enable you to defeat them." **29**The Israelites had many of their soldiers hide in the fields around Gibeah. **30**The other Israelite soldiers advanced against Gibeah for a third time. They stood in their positions for fighting a battle against the Benjaminite army just as they had done on the previous days. **31**Then the soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin came out of the city to fight against them. The Israelite soldiers retreated so that they would chase them and go away from the city. The Benjaminite soliders were able to kill some of them as they had done before. They killed them on the roads {that they were using to retreat}. (One of those roads went to Bethel, and the other road went through the countryside to Gibeah.) They killed about 30 Israelite soldiers. **32**The men of the tribe of Benjamin thought, "We are defeating them as we did before!" But the Israelite soldiers had only retreated in order to trick the soldiers from Benjamin into leaving the city and going down the roads. **33**All at once, the soldiers in the main Israelite army stopped running away and came together into battle positions at a place that people call Baal Tamar. The other Israelite soldiers ran out from where they had been hiding in Maareh Gibeah. **34**There were 10,000 of those soldiers, and the Israelites had selected them for this mission from throughout their army. They advanced against the Benjaminite soldiers from the direction of the city. There was a very big battle. The soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin did not yet realize that the Israelites were going to defeat them badly. **35**Yahweh enabled the Israelite soldiers to defeat the soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin. That day the Israelites killed 25,100 Benjaminites who had all learned how to fight well with a sword. **36**Finally the soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin recognized that they were going to lose the battle. {They realized that} the Israelite soldiers had only retreated because they knew they had other soldiers hiding around Gibeah {who would come and attack them from behind}. **37**Those soldiers who had been hiding came out and rushed quickly into Gibeah. They killed everyone who lived in the city. **38**The main group of Israelite soldiers {knew when to stop fleeing and turn around and attack because they} had arranged for the soldiers who were hiding to give them a signal. They told them to {set the city on fire once they had entered it so that} a great cloud of smoke would rise from it into the sky. **39**That was why the main group of Israelite soldiers had fled from the battle. They wanted the soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin to think that they were winning the battle, just as they had before. The soldiers from Benjamin were able to kill about 30 Israelite soldiers. **40**But then a cloud of smoke began to rise up from the city because the Israelite soldiers who had been hiding were setting fires as a signal. The soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin turned around and saw a great cloud of smoke going up into the sky because fires were burning throughout the city. **41**The main group of Israelite men also saw the smoke, and so they turned around {and began to attack the Benjaminites}. The soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin became very afraid, because they realized that they were going to be badly defeated. **42**So the soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin tried to run away toward the desolate area outside the city to escape from the Israelite soldiers. But they were not able to escape, because the rest of the Israelite soldiers were coming at them from the other direction. They were caught between the two groups. **43**The Israelite soldiers surrounded many of the soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin, chasing them into an area east of Gibeah. The Israelite soldiers easily killed many of them there. **44**The Israelites killed 18,000 soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin who were all great warriors. **45**Those who were still alive tried to run to the rock of Rimmon in a desolate area {where they could protect themselves}. But the Israelite soldiers killed 5,000 more soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin on the roads as they were trying to run away. The Israelites chased other soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin who were fleeing towards the city of Gidom. The Israelites killed 2,000 of them. **46**Altogether 25,000 soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin who had learned how to fight well with a sword died that day. They were all great warriors. **47**But 600 soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin escaped into a desolate area. They got safely to the rock of Rimmon, and they stayed there for four months. **48**Then the Israelite soldiers went throughout the territory that belonged to the tribe of Benjamin and

slaughtered everyone. They killed all the people in each city. They also killed all the animals and destroyed everything else that was in those cities. They also burned all of the cities in that territory to the ground.

Chapter 21

1(When the Israelites gathered at Mizpah before they started to fight the tribe of Benjamin, all of the men made a solemn promise. They had declared, “None of us will ever allow one of our daughters to marry a man from the tribe of Benjamin!”) **2**{After destroying the people, animals, and property throughout the territory of Benjamin,} the Israelites went to Bethel where God’s sacred tent was. They sat down and wept very loudly and sadly all day. **3**They kept saying, “Yahweh, you are the God of us Israelite people. But one of our Israelite tribes does not exist anymore! This should not have happened to us!” **4**Early the next morning, the people built an altar at Bethel. The priests made sacrifices for them that they burned completely on the altar, and they also made fellowship sacrifices. **5**Then the Israelites started asking whether the people of any city in one of the tribes of Israel had not come when they met to ask Yahweh for guidance. They were asking this because they had all sworn very solemnly that they would kill any group that did not come when they met with Yahweh at Mizpah. **6**The Israelites {were asking about this because they} felt sorry for their fellow Israelites from the tribe of Benjamin. They said, “Now one of our Israelite tribes no longer exists. **7**Let us think about what we can do to make sure that the surviving men from the tribe of Benjamin have wives. {This is a difficult problem, because} all of us here made a solemn promise to Yahweh that we would not allow any of our daughters to marry a man from the tribe of Benjamin.” **8**That is why the people were asking whether the people from any city in one of the tribes of Israel had not sent anyone to Mizpah when the Israelites met with Yahweh there. They thought they recalled that no one had come from the city of Jabesh Gilead to the meeting at Mizpah. **9**So they checked everyone who was there in Bethel, and they found that no one who lived in the city of Jabesh Gilead was there. {This seemed to prove that none of them had come to Mizpah.} **10**So all the Israelites chose 12,000 experienced soldiers and gave them orders to go and kill all of the people who lived in Jabesh Gilead, including the women and the children. **11**They told those soldiers: “This is what we want you to do: kill all of the men in Jabesh Gilead. You must also kill every married woman. {But do not kill the unmarried women.}” **12**{So those soldiers went to Jabesh Gilead and killed all the men, married women, and children.} But in that city they found 400 young women there who had never been married. So they brought them to Shiloh{, where they had all gone by then}. That city was across the river from the region where the city of Jabesh Gilead was. **13**Then all the Israelites who had gathered sent a message to the men from the tribe of Benjamin who had gone to the rock of Rimmon {where they could protect themselves}. The Israelites said that they would not try to kill them. **14**So the Benjaminites then came back from the rock of Rimmon. The Israelites allowed them to marry the young women from Jabesh Gilead whom they had not killed. But {there were only 400 women.} That was not enough women for those 600 men. **15**So the Israelites still felt sorry for the men of the tribe of Benjamin. It seemed that one of the Israelite tribes would not exist any more because Yahweh had told the other Israelites to fight against that tribe. **16**The Israelite leaders said, “We have killed all the women of the tribe of Benjamin. So where can we get women to be wives of the men who are still alive?” **17**They continued, “These surviving Benjaminites must have wives {who will give birth to children so that their family lines can continue}. Otherwise, the tribe of Benjamin will no longer exist in Israel. **18**But we Israelites all solemnly asked Yahweh to curse anyone who gave one of his daughters to any man of the tribe of Benjamin as a wife. So we cannot allow our daughters to marry these men.” **19**Then they had an idea. They remembered, “Every year there is a festival to honor Yahweh at Shiloh.” (That city is north of Bethel and east of the road that extends from Bethel to Shechem. It is south of the city of Lebonah.) **20**So the Israelite leaders told the surviving men of the tribe of Benjamin {who did not yet have wives}, “When it is the time for that festival, go to Shiloh and hide in the vineyards around the city. **21**Keep watching for the young women to come out of Shiloh to dance. When they come out, run out from the vineyards. Each of you men can seize one of the young women of Shiloh. Then you can all return to your homes in the territory of Benjamin with those women as your wives. **22**If their fathers or brothers come to us and demand that you give the women back, we will say to them, ‘Please allow us to give your young women to the men of Benjamin as wives. Do this because, when we fought them, we did not leave any women alive who could be their wives. And you are not giving your young women now to the men from the tribe of Benjamin as wives. They stole them. So you will not be guilty of breaking the oath that we all swore not to give any of our daughters as a wife to any of them.’” **23**So that is what the men of

the tribe of Benjamin did. They went to Shiloh at the time of the festival. When the young women came out of the city to dance, each man grabbed one of them and took her away and married her. Then they took their wives back to the land that the Israelite leaders had assigned to them. They rebuilt their cities that the other Israelites had burned down, and they lived there. **24**Then the other Israelites left Shiloh and all went back to where their families and tribes lived. They returned to the areas that the Israelite leaders had assigned to their tribes. **25**At that time, Israel did not have a king, and everyone did what they thought they should do.

Ruth

Chapter 1

1During the time that judges ruled {Israel}, there was a famine in that country. A man from the town of Bethlehem
in the region of Judah {in the country of Israel} left there and went to live for a while in the country of Moab. His
wife and his two sons went with him. **2**The man's name was Elimelek and his wife's name was Naomi. The names of
his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. All of them were part of the clan of Ephrathah, from Bethlehem in Judah.
They came to the land of Moab and stayed there. **3**Then Naomi's husband, Elimelek, died, and Naomi had only her
two sons with her. **4**{Eventually,} the sons married women from Moab. The name of one woman was Orpah, and
the name of the other woman was Ruth. But after Naomi and her sons had lived in Moab for about ten years,
5Mahlon and Kilion also died. So then Naomi was alone without her husband or her two sons.

6{One day} while Naomi was in Moab, she heard someone say that Yahweh had helped his people {in Israel} and
that now they had plenty of food. So she got ready to return {to Bethlehem} with her daughters-in-law. **7**She and
her two daughters-in-law left the place where she had been living and they started to walk along the road back to
Judah. **8**Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Each of you should turn around and go back to live with
your mother. I am asking Yahweh to be as faithful to you as you have been to your dead husbands and to me. **9**I
am asking Yahweh to allow each of you to have another husband with whom you will have a secure home." Then
she kissed each of them, and they cried aloud. **10**They each said, "No! We will return with you to your relatives."

11But Naomi said, "No, my daughters. Return home. It will not do any good for you to come with me! It is not
possible for me to have more sons who could become your husbands. **12**You should go back, my daughters. It is
too late for me to have another husband. Even if I thought that I could have another husband, and was married
even tonight and had more sons, **13**you would not wait until they grew up! You could not remain unmarried until
then! No, my daughters, Yahweh has done very bad things to me, causing me to grieve very much. But your lives
do not need to be as bad as mine."

14Then Ruth and Orpah cried loudly again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law {goodbye and left}, but Ruth stayed
with Naomi. **15**Naomi said to her, "Look! Your sister-in-law is going back to her relatives and to the god that she
worshiped {previously}! Go back with her!" **16**But Ruth replied, "No! Please do not insist that I abandon you and
stop taking care of you! Wherever you travel, I will travel too. Wherever you live, I will live too. Your relatives will be
my relatives, and I will worship the God whom you worship. **17**Wherever you die, there I will die, and they will bury
me there. May Yahweh punish me severely if I leave you even after we die." **18**When Naomi realized that Ruth had
firmly resolved to go with her, Naomi stopped urging Ruth to return home.

19So the two women continued walking until they came to the town of Bethlehem. When they arrived in
Bethlehem, many people in the town began talking loudly about them. Many women of the town exclaimed, "It is
hard to believe that this is Naomi!" **20**Naomi said to them, "You should not call me Naomi anymore, since it means
'pleasant.' Instead, call me Mara, because it means 'bitter.' God Almighty has made my life very bitter. **21**When I left,
I had everything I could want, but Yahweh has brought me back with nothing. Do not call me Naomi. Yahweh has
opposed me. Almighty God has treated me badly."

22So that is how Naomi returned home along with her daughter-in-law Ruth, the woman from Moab. When they
arrived in Bethlehem, it was the season for people there to begin harvesting their crops of barley.

Chapter 2

1There was a man {there} who was a relative of Naomi's {dead} husband, Elimelek. He was rich and important, and a member of the same clan to which Elimelek belonged. The man's name was Boaz. **2**Ruth (the woman from Moab) said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the grain that the harvesters leave behind. I will go behind any harvester who allows me to do so." Naomi replied, "Go ahead, my daughter." **3**So Ruth went. When she got to the fields, she followed the harvesters and picked up grain. The part of the field that she was working in just happened to belong to Boaz, Elimelek's relative.

4Just then, Boaz arrived from Bethlehem! He greeted the harvesters, "May Yahweh be with you!" They replied, "May Yahweh bless you!"

5Then Boaz {saw Ruth, and} asked his foreman, "Who is that young woman related to?" **6**The foreman replied, "She is the young woman from Moab who accompanied Naomi when she returned from there. **7**The woman said to me, 'Please let me pick up the grain that the men who are harvesting leave behind.' {I allowed her to do so.} She has worked since early this morning until recently, when she rested for a short time under the shelter." **8**Then Boaz {walked over to where Ruth was and} said to Ruth, "Young lady, please listen to me. You do not need to go to any other field or anywhere else to gather grain. You should stay right here with my servant girls. **9**Watch where the men are harvesting and follow along behind my servant girls. I have told the men {who are harvesting} not to molest you. Whenever you are thirsty, go and get some water to drink from the jars that the men have filled."

10Then she knelt before him {in respect} with her forehead touching the ground. She exclaimed, "Why are you being so kind to me? I did not think that you would pay any attention to me, since I am a foreigner!" **11**Boaz replied, "People have told me everything that you have done for your mother-in-law since your husband died. They told me that you left your parents and your homeland, and that you came here to live among people whom you did not know previously. **12**I pray that Yahweh will fully repay you for what you have done. Yes, may Yahweh, the God of Israel, the one whom you are trusting to protect you, reward you in full."

13She replied, "Sir, I hope I will continue to please you. You have comforted me by speaking so kindly to me, your servant, and yet I am not even {worthy to be} one of your servant girls!"

14When it was time to eat, Boaz said to Ruth, "Come over here {and get some food}. Take some of this bread and dip it in the vinegar and eat it." So she {came and} sat down with the harvesters. Then he gave her some roasted grain. She ate all {the food} that she wanted and had some left over. **15**After she stood up to go back to work, Boaz ordered his workers, "Even if she gathers some grain near the bundles of grain {that you have cut}, do not tell her to stop doing that. **16**Even more than that, I want you to pull out some stalks of grain from the bundles and leave them {on the ground} for her to pick up—and do not scold her."

17So Ruth gathered grain in the field until evening. Then she threshed the barley that she had gathered{, to separate the kernels from the stalks}. The barley kernels were enough to fill a large basket. **18**She carried it back to town and showed her mother-in-law how much she had gathered. Ruth also gave her mother-in-law the roasted grain that she had left over after she had eaten all that she had wanted {at lunchtime}. **19**Her mother-in-law asked her, "Where did you gather all this grain today? In whose field did you work? I pray that God will bless the man who was so kind to you." Then Ruth told her about the person with whom she had worked. She said, "The name of the man who owns the field where I worked today is Boaz." **20**Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May Yahweh bless him! Yahweh has continued to act faithfully toward {us} who are still living, and to {our husbands} who have died." Then Naomi said, "That man is a close relative {of Elimelek}. In fact, he is one of those responsible for taking care of our family."

21Then Ruth, the woman from Moab, said, "He also told me to stay with his workers until they are done bringing in all his grain from the field."

22Naomi replied to her daughter-in-law Ruth, "My daughter, it will be good for you to go {to his field} with his servant girls, because if you go to someone else's field, someone might assault you."

23So Ruth worked alongside of Boaz's servant girls. She gathered heads of grain until the workers had finished harvesting both the barley and the wheat. {During that time,} she continued to live with Naomi.

Chapter 3

1One day, Naomi said to Ruth, "My daughter, I want to arrange for you to have a secure home with a good husband. **2**Now, you have been working with Boaz's servant girls. As you know, he is a close relative of ours. So listen carefully. Tonight he will be at the place where they thresh the barley. He will be separating the grain from the chaff. **3**Bathe yourself and put on some perfume. Put on your full outer cloak. Then go down to the place where they thresh the grain. But do not let him know that you are there until he has finished his {evening} meal. **4**When he lies down {to sleep}, pay attention to where he lies down. Then go {over to him}, uncover his feet, and lie down {there}. {When he wakes up,} he will be the one to tell you what to do {next}."

5Ruth replied, "I will do everything that you have told me to do." **6**So she went down to the place where people thresh the grain. There she did everything that her mother-in-law had told her to do.

7{This is what happened:} When Boaz finished eating and drinking, he was feeling good. He went over to the far end of the grain pile, lay down there{, and went to sleep}. Then Ruth stealthily approached him. She took the covering off his feet and lay down {there}. **8**In the middle of the night, he woke up suddenly. He sat up and was amazed to find a woman lying at his feet! **9**He asked her, "Who are you?" She replied, "I am your servant, Ruth. Since you are the one responsible for my dead husband's family, please make me secure by marrying me."

10Boaz replied, "May Yahweh bless you, my dear! Previously, you were very faithful to your mother-in-law, but you are acting even more faithfully now by not chasing after a young man to marry, whether rich or poor. **11**Now, my dear, I will do everything that you asked. Do not be afraid, because everyone in this town knows that you are an honorable woman. **12**However, while it is true that I am one of Elimelek's close relatives and, therefore, could be responsible {for you and Naomi}, there is another man who is a closer relative than I am. {He is the one who is actually responsible for you.} **13**You stay here for the rest of the night. Tomorrow morning I will tell this man about you. If he says that he will take care of you, fine, he can marry you. But if he is unwilling to take care of you, I solemnly promise that, as surely as Yahweh lives, I will marry you and take care of you myself. So stay here until it is morning."

14Then Boaz added, "It would be best if no one knew that a woman came here." So she lay at his feet until early morning and got up {to leave} before {it was light enough that} people would be able to recognize her. **15**Then Boaz said to her, "Bring your shawl over here and hold it out." When she did that, he poured a generous amount of barley into it and put it on her back. Then he went into town.

16When Ruth arrived home, her mother-in-law asked her, "How did things turn out for you, my daughter?" Then Ruth told her all that Boaz had said and done for her. **17**She also said to Naomi, "He gave me all this barley, saying, 'I do not want you to return to your mother-in-law with nothing.'" **18**Then Naomi said, "My daughter, just wait here until we see what happens. That man will work hard on this matter until he has resolved it today."

Chapter 4

1Meanwhile, Boaz went up to {the place inside} the town gate {where people conducted their official business}. He sat down there. Just as he had hoped, the man responsible for Naomi's family came along, the man whom Boaz had mentioned earlier. Boaz called out to him by name and said, "Come over here and sit down." So the man came over and sat down. **2**Boaz then gathered ten of the older, well-respected men from the town and said {to them}, "Please sit here {so you can witness our business}." So they sat down. **3**Then Boaz said to the man responsible for Naomi's family, "The part of the field that belonged to our relative Elimelek is for sale. Naomi, who recently returned from Moab, is selling it. **4**I thought that I should tell you {about it} and suggest that you buy {the field}

while the people who are sitting here are listening, including these leaders of our people. If you want to buy it back into the family, then do so. But if you do not want to buy it back, then let me know, because you are the closest relative to Elimelek, and I am next after you." The man replied, "No, I will buy it!" **5**Then Boaz told him, "When you buy the land from Naomi, you will also need to marry Ruth, our deceased relative's widow from Moab, in order that she may have a son who will inherit the property and who will continue Elimelek's family line." **6**Then the nearer relative said, "Then I cannot buy it back myself. If I did that, I would ruin my own son's inheritance. You may be responsible for the land and the woman instead of me. I cannot do it."

7(At that time in Israel, people had a different way of redeeming {land} or exchanging {goods between them}. In order to make these matters legally binding, one man would take off one of his sandals and give it to the other man. That was the way people in Israel made final what they had agreed to do.) **8**So after the relative said to Boaz, "You buy the field yourself," he took off one of his sandals {and gave it to Boaz}.

9Then Boaz said to the respected men and to all the other people who were there, "Today you have all seen that I have bought from Naomi all the property that belonged to Elimelek, Kilion, and Mahlon. **10**I am also taking Ruth, Mahlon's widow from Moab, to be my wife. This is in order that she may give birth to a son. Everyone will consider this son to be a descendant of Elimelek. This son will inherit the property and carry on Elimelek's family name among his relatives and here in his hometown. Today you have seen and heard these things and can speak of them to anyone who asks about them."

11All the respected men, and the others who were sitting at the town gate, agreed, and they said, "Yes, we have seen and heard. We pray that Yahweh will allow this woman, who will be coming into your home, to be like Rachel and Leah, the two who bore our ancestors and started our people, Israel. May you become great in the clan of Ephrathah and famous here in Bethlehem! **12**We pray that your family will be like the family of your ancestor Perez, son of Judah and Tamar, because of the many descendants that Yahweh will give to you and this young woman."

13So Boaz married Ruth and had sexual relations with her. Yahweh enabled her to become pregnant, and she gave birth to a son. **14**The women of Bethlehem said to Naomi, "Praise Yahweh for giving you a man to preserve your family today. We pray to Yahweh that people throughout Israel will greatly respect him. **15**Your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who has been better to you than if you had seven sons, has given birth to him. Therefore, he will make you feel young again, and he will take care of you when you become old."

16Then Naomi picked up the baby and held him closely and became a second mother to him. **17**The women who were living nearby said, "It is as though Naomi now has a son!" They named him Obed. Later, Obed became the father of Jesse, who became the father of {King} David. **18**Here is a list of the descendants of Perez: Perez's son was Hezron. **19**Hezron's son was Ram. Ram's son was Amminadab. **20**Amminadab's son was Nahshon. Nahshon's son was Salmon. **21**Salmon's son was Boaz. Boaz's son was Obed. **22**Obed's son was Jesse. Jesse's son was {King} David.

1 Samuel

Chapter 1

1There was a man whose name was Elkanah who lived in the town of Ramathaim Zophim. That town was in the hilly area where the people of the tribe of Ephraim live. His father was Jeroham, his grandfather was Elihu, his great-grandfather was Tohu, and his great-great-grandfather was Zuph. Elkanah belonged to the tribe of Ephraim.
2Elkanah had two wives. Their names were Hannah and Peninnah. Now Peninnah had several children, but Hannah had no children.

3Once every year Elkanah went with his family from Ramah to the city of Shiloh. He would go there to worship Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, and offer sacrifices to him. The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were serving Yahweh as priests there {with their father}. **4**Every year when Elkanah offered sacrifices, he would give servings of meat to Peninnah and to each of her children. **5**But he would serve Hannah twice as much meat because he loved her very much even though Yahweh had not allowed her to give birth to children. **6**But Elkanah's other wife, Peninnah, would try to make Hannah upset. She would remind her that Yahweh had not allowed her to give birth to any children. **7**Every year when the family went to Yahweh's sacred tent, Peninnah would make Hannah so upset that Hannah cried and would not eat. **8**Then her husband Elkanah would say to her, "Hannah, you should not be crying. You should eat something. You do not need to be sad. You have me as your loving husband, and that is better than having ten sons {but an unhappy marriage}."

9One year, after the family had finished eating and drinking at Shiloh, Hannah went over to Yahweh's sacred tent to pray. Eli the priest was sitting on a chair by the doorway of the sacred tent {so he could see and speak with the people who came in and out}. **10**Hannah was very upset, and so she cried very sorrowfully as she prayed to Yahweh. **11**Hannah made a solemn promise. She said, "Yahweh, you command the heavenly armies{, so you are powerful enough to do anything}. I am a woman who serves you devotedly. Please consider how unhappy I am. Please do something to help me. Allow me to give birth to a son. If you do that, then I will dedicate him to you for as long as he lives. And {to show that we have dedicated him,} we will never cut his hair."

12Hannah prayed to Yahweh for a long time. As she prayed, Eli noticed that her lips were moving. **13**But Hannah was just praying silently. She was not speaking out loud. So Eli thought that she was drunk. **14**He said to her, "You should not be getting drunk! Get rid of the wine you have been drinking!"

15Hannah replied, "Sir, I am not drunk, I am just very sad. I have not been drinking any wine or beer. I have been praying and telling Yahweh how I feel and what I want him to do for me. **16**Do not think that I am a bad woman. Someone has made me feel very badly, so I have a lot to talk to Yahweh about. That is all I have been doing."

17Eli replied, "I wish that things may go well for you. I hope that God, whom we Israelite people worship, may give you what you have asked of him."

18She replied, "Please continue to hope and pray that good things will happen to me." Then she returned to her family, and she ate the meal that her husband had served to her. She was not sad anymore.

19Early the next morning, Elkanah and his family got up and worshiped Yahweh again. After that, they returned to their home at Ramah. Then Elkanah had sexual relations with his wife Hannah, and Yahweh answered her prayer.
20She became pregnant, and nine months later she gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel. That name expressed in her language that Yahweh had answered her prayer for a son.

21The next year, Elkanah went to Shiloh with his family to offer to Yahweh the kind of sacrifice he made each year. He also went to make a special offering that he had promised to make. **22**But Hannah did not go with them. She

told her husband, “I want to keep the baby here until I have weaned him. After that, I will take him to Shiloh and present him to Yahweh. He will stay there for the rest of his life.”

23Elkanah told her, “Do what you think is best. Stay here until you have weaned him. And may Yahweh bless this boy as his priest Eli wished he would.” So Hannah stayed at home and nursed Samuel until she had weaned him.

24After she weaned him, even though Samuel was still very young, she took him to Yahweh’s sacred tent at Shiloh. She also brought three bulls{, one for an offering that the priests would burn completely and the other two for festive meals that the family and others would share}. She also brought about twenty liters of flour and a large container of wine {because the law of Moses required people to offer that amount of flour and wine with sacrifices}. **25**Elkanah and Hannah slaughtered the bull {so that the priests could offer it to Yahweh on the altar}. Then they brought their son to Eli. **26**Then Hannah said to him, “Sir, please listen to me. I swear by your own life, sir, that what I am saying is true. I am the woman who was praying to Yahweh as I stood here beside you. **27**I prayed that I would have a son, and Yahweh answered my prayer. Here he is! **28**So now I am presenting him to Yahweh. He will belong to Yahweh as long as he lives.” Then Elkanah and his family worshiped Yahweh there.

Chapter 2

1Then Hannah prayed. She said,

“In my inner being I am so happy about what you, Yahweh, have done!

I am strong because I belong to you.

I laugh at my enemies

because I am celebrating the way that you, Yahweh, have helped me.

2No one else is holy as you are, Yahweh.

You are the only real God.

You, our God, are the only one who can protect us

as if you were a huge rock that we could stand atop and be safe from danger.

3{You people who oppose God,} stop making so many boasts!

Yahweh is a God who knows everything,

and he will evaluate what each person does.

So do not speak so arrogantly! **4**Yahweh, you destroy the weapons of mighty soldiers,

but you give strength to those who totter because they are so weak.

5Many people who previously had plenty to eat now have to work for other people to earn money to buy food,

but many who were always hungry are not hungry anymore.

Women who could not have any children before have now given birth to many children,

but women who had many children before are not able to have any more.

6You, Yahweh, cause some people to die,

and you cause other people to live.

It seems that some people will soon go to where dead people go,

but you make them healthy again.

7Yahweh, you cause some people to be poor,

but you cause others to become rich.

You humble some people,

but you honor other people.

8Needy people often do not have homes,

but Yahweh gives those poor people places to live in.

People then treat them respectfully,

and they even sit with community leaders.

After all, it was Yahweh who created a place

on which the world itself rests.

9You protect from harm people who are loyal to you,

but you cause wicked people to die and go to the dark place where dead people go.

People do not defeat their enemies by their own strength. **10**Yahweh, you will break into pieces those who fight against you.

You will come powerfully to punish them.

You, Yahweh, will judge people everywhere.

When you choose a king for us Israelites, you will make him strong.

Yes, when you have a leader anoint someone as our king, you will make him powerful."

11After that, Elkanah and his family returned to their home in Ramah. But Samuel, who was still a little boy, stayed at the sacred tent to work with Eli the priest to help the people worship Yahweh.

12Eli's two sons {were priests like their father, but they} did very bad things. That was because they did not respect Yahweh. **13**This is how they treated the people. A family would bring an animal to sacrifice to Yahweh. While the people were still boiling the meat, Eli's sons would send one of their servants over to them. The servant would be holding a large, three-pronged fork. **14**The servant would stick the fork into whatever container the people were using to boil the meat. He would use the fork to pull out whatever meat he could. He would then take that meat back to Eli's sons {, even though this was more than the law said the priests could have}. That was how they treated all of the Israelites who brought animals to sacrifice at the sacred tent in Shiloh. **15**Also, before the people cut off the fat so the priests could burn it, the servant of Eli's sons would come over to them. The servant would tell the people who were preparing the sacrifice, "Give me some meat now to take to the priest for him to roast! He wants raw meat. He will not accept boiled meat."

16The people would say to the servant, "We will give you as much meat as you want, if you will only have the priests cut off the fat and burn it first." But the servant would answer, "No, give it to me now{, before anyone has burned the fat}. If you do not give some raw meat to me, I will take some from you forcibly!"

17Eli's sons were committing a very serious sin that offended Yahweh personally. They were treating very disrespectfully the offerings that people were bringing to Yahweh.

18As for Samuel, who was still a young boy, he continued to do work for Yahweh. He wore a little linen apron {that showed he was a helper at the sacred tent}. **19**Each year his mother made a new little robe for him. She took it to him when she went to Shiloh with her husband to offer their annual sacrifice. **20**Then Eli would ask God to do good things for Elkanah and his wife. He would say to Elkanah, “I hope that Yahweh will enable your wife to give birth to other children, since she brought the child here whom she asked Yahweh to give her.” Then Elkanah and his family would return to their home. **21**And Yahweh helped Hannah to have three more sons and two daughters. {She raised them at home,} while Samuel {stayed in Shiloh and} grew up while doing work for Yahweh in his sacred tent.

22Eli became very old. He heard about all the bad things that his sons were doing to the Israelite people. He heard that they were having sexual relations with the women who stayed near the sacred tent so they could help with the work there. **23**He said to them, “It is terrible that you are doing such things! You are causing many people to complain to me about the wicked things you are doing.” **24**My sons, stop it! The people who worship Yahweh have been giving me accounts of your bad behavior! **25**Suppose one person does something wrong to another person. Then God can act as a referee between them. But suppose a person does something wrong to Yahweh. Then no one can act as a referee between him and Yahweh!” But Eli’s sons would not stop what they were doing, even though their father had commanded them to stop. This was because Yahweh had decided that they had already done so many wicked things that they deserved to die.

26Samuel, however, continued to grow up, and the things that boy did pleased Yahweh and other people. **27**One day, a prophet came to Eli and spoke a message to him on behalf of Yahweh. He said, “You know that I appeared to your ancestor Aaron when your whole family were slaves of the king of Egypt. **28**From all the tribes of the Israelite people, I chose him and his male descendants to be my priests. I appointed them to offer sacrifices on my altar, to burn incense, and to wear sacred aprons as they worked for me. I allowed them to have as their own food some of the meat from the animals that the Israelite people brought as sacrifices. **29**But you and your sons are treating with great disrespect the sacrifices and offerings that I commanded the people to bring to my sacred tent! You are letting your sons do what they want instead of making sure that all of you do what I want. You have all been getting fat from eating the best parts of all the sacrifices that my Israelite people have been bringing to me!’

30Therefore, this is what Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, declares: ‘I definitely promised that your family would continually serve me as priests, since you are descendants of Aaron. But now,’ he declares, ‘I will certainly not allow you to continue to be priests. I will honor people who honor me, but I will disgrace people who treat me disrespectfully. **31**Listen carefully! There will soon be a time when I will cause all the strong young men in your family and in your clan to die. The result will be that no men in your family will live long enough to become old men. **32**The sacred tent where you serve will experience loss and neglect, even as I do good things for the people of Israel. And I repeat that no men in your family will ever live long enough to become old men. **33**I will allow some of your descendants to survive and continue to serve at my altar. But they will be so sad about what happens to the sacred tent that their eyes will get very tired from crying. And all of your descendants will die while they are still young. **34**And your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will both die on the same day. That will prove to you that everything I have told you will happen.

35I have chosen another man to be my priest. He is someone who will serve me faithfully. He will do everything I want. I will make sure that he has descendants who will be priests. He will continually be a helper to the king whom I will appoint. **36**All of your descendants who remain alive will have to go to that priest and ask him to give them money and food. They will have to ask him to allow them to work with the other priests so that they can earn money to buy food.”

Chapter 3

1While he was still a boy, Samuel was working for Yahweh while Eli supervised him. At that time, Yahweh did not often speak messages to people, and Yahweh did not often give visions to people.

2By that time Eli's eyes were very weak; he was almost blind. One night he was sleeping in his room. **3**Samuel was sleeping in the sacred tent of Yahweh, where the sacred chest was. The lamp there was still burning. **4**Just then Yahweh called out to Samuel. Samuel replied, "I am ready to do whatever you ask!"

5Then he got up and ran to Eli. He told him, "I have come because you called me. I am ready to do whatever you ask." But Eli replied, "No, I did not call you. Go back to bed." So Samuel went and lay down again.

6Then Yahweh called out to Samuel again. So Samuel got up once more and went to Eli. He said, "I have come because you called me. I am ready to do whatever you ask." But Eli said, "No, dear boy, I did not call you. Go back and lie down."

7{Samuel did not realize that it was Yahweh who was speaking to him because} he had not yet become personally acquainted with Yahweh. That was because Yahweh had not previously spoken to him to reveal something to him.

8After he lay down again, Yahweh called out to Samuel yet again. So Samuel got up yet again and went to Eli. He said, "I have come because you called me. I am ready to do whatever you ask." Then

Eli realized that it was Yahweh who had been calling Samuel. **9**So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down again. If the same person calls you again, say, 'I am ready to obey you, Yahweh, so please tell me what you want me to do.'" So Samuel went back to bed and lay down. **10**Then Yahweh came and stood and called as he had done the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Please tell me what you want me to do, because I am ready to obey you."

11Then Yahweh said to Samuel, "Listen carefully! I am about to do something here in Israel that will shock everyone who hears about it. **12**There will soon be a time when I punish Eli and his family. I will do to them everything that I said I would do. **13**Eli's sons have been doing things that are so wicked that they deserve severe punishment. Eli knows they have been doing those things. But he has not disciplined them. So I told him that I would punish all future generations of his family. **14**That is why I solemnly told Eli's family, 'Even if you give me sacrifices or offerings, I will still consider you guilty of your sin and punish you for it.'"

15Samuel stayed in bed until it became light. Then he got up and opened the doors of the building {as usual}. He was too afraid to tell Eli what Yahweh had said to him when he appeared to him. **16**But Eli called him and said, "Samuel, my dear boy{, please come here.}" Samuel {came and} told him, "I am ready to do whatever you ask."

17Eli asked him, "What did Yahweh say to you? Please tell me honestly. If you do not tell me everything that he said to you, may God do those things and even worse things to you!"

18So Samuel told him everything that Yahweh had said to him, without leaving anything out. Then Eli said, "{Since} it was Yahweh {who said this, I must accept it}. I am willing for him to do whatever he considers to be best."

19As Samuel grew up, Yahweh helped him. He told Samuel accurately what he was going to do, so that everything Samuel predicted happened. **20**As a result, all the people of Israel, from the northern end of the country to the southern end, realized that Samuel was a prophet who truly spoke for Yahweh. **21**Yahweh kept appearing {to Samuel} in Shiloh. Samuel would see Yahweh speaking messages to him in visions.

Chapter 4

1Samuel told all the people of Israel the messages that God gave him.

At that time the Israelite army went to fight against the army of the Philistine people. The Israelite army set up their tents at the place that people would later call Ebenezer. The Philistine army set up their tents near the city of Aphek. **2**The Philistine army formed a battle line, and the Israelites came and fought with them. In a great battle, the Philistines defeated the Israelites. In combat, they killed about 4,000 of the soldiers in their battle line. **3**When the remaining Israelite soldiers returned to their camp, the Israelite elders asked, "Why did Yahweh allow the

Philistine army to defeat us today? {It must have been because we did not bring the sacred chest into battle with us.} We should bring the sacred chest here from Shiloh. That way we can bring it with us when we go into battle again, and it will keep our enemies from defeating us!”

4So the soldiers sent some men to Shiloh, and those men brought back the sacred chest of Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies. There were statues of winged creatures on top of the chest, and those statues were like a throne for Yahweh. Eli’s two sons Hophni and Phinehas traveled with the sacred chest to the Israelite military camp.

5When they saw the men bringing the sacred chest into their camp, the Israelite soldiers {were so happy that they} shouted loudly. The sound of their shout echoed throughout the land. **6**The Philistines heard this sound and asked, “What are the soldiers in the Hebrew camp shouting about?” Someone told them that {they were shouting because} men had brought the sacred chest of Yahweh into their camp. **7**They said, “A god has come into their camp {to help them fight against us}!” This made them very afraid. They said, “We are in big trouble now! Nothing like this has ever happened before! **8**We certainly are in big trouble! The gods of the Israelites are very strong, and it will be difficult to overcome their power. It was the gods of the Israelites who made the Egyptians suffer from many plagues in the barren land outside their country. **9**You Philistine soldiers must be very brave! If you do not fight bravely, {the Hebrews will defeat you and} you will become their slaves, just as they have been your slaves! So fight bravely!”

10So the Philistine soldiers fought {very hard}, and they defeated the Israelite soldiers so badly that they all fled from the battle and ran back to their military camp. The Philistines won a big victory and killed 30,000 of the Israelite soldiers. **11**The Philistines captured the sacred chest, and they killed Eli’s two sons, Hophni and Phinehas.

12On that same day, a man from the tribe of Benjamin arrived at Shiloh. He had run {with news} from the place where the armies were fighting. He had torn his clothes and thrown dirt on his head {to show that he was very sad}. **13**Eli was very anxious to know whether anything bad had happened to God’s sacred chest. So he was sitting on a seat next to the road waiting for any messengers who might come with news of the battle. When the man arrived and told what had happened, the people of the city started to cry loudly.

14Eli heard the noise and asked, “Why are people making all this noise?” So the messenger ran over to Eli and told him what had happened.

15At that time, Eli was 98 years old, and he had become completely blind. **16**The messenger said to Eli, “I am the messenger who has come from where the armies were fighting. I ran from the battle lines earlier today.” Eli asked, “What happened, young man?”

17The messenger responded, “The Philistines defeated our army. They killed a great many of our soldiers, and the others ran away. The Philistines killed your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. They also captured God’s sacred chest.”

18As soon as Eli heard what had happened to the sacred chest, he fell backward off his seat beside the city gate. Because he was very old and very fat, he broke his neck when he fell, and that killed him. He had led the Israelite people for 40 years.

19The wife of Eli’s son Phinehas was pregnant, and it was almost time for her to give birth to her baby. When she heard the news that the Philistines had captured God’s sacred chest and that her husband and her father-in-law had died, her labor pains suddenly began. She crouched down and gave birth. **20**{But the birth was so difficult that it caused her to die.} As she was dying, the women who were helping her tried to encourage her. They said to her, “Be brave! You have given birth to a son!” But this did not matter to her, so she said nothing in reply.

21She named the boy Ichabod. She said, “There is no glory anymore in Israel.” She was talking about how the Philistines had captured God’s sacred chest and how her husband and her father-in-law had died. **22**She said that there was no glory anymore in Israel because the Philistines had captured God’s sacred chest. {And then she died.}

Chapter 5

[1]When the Philistine soldiers captured God's sacred chest, they took it from the area of Ebenezer{, where they had fought the Israelites,} to their city of Ashdod. [2]They carried it into the temple of their god Dagon and placed it alongside a statue of Dagon. [3]The next morning, when the people of Ashdod first got up, they {went into the temple and} saw that the statue was lying face down on the ground in front of Yahweh's sacred chest! So they picked up the statue of Dagon and put it back in its usual place. [4]But when they first got up the following morning, they saw that it was once again lying face down on the ground in front of Yahweh's sacred chest. And the statue no longer had its head or hands. Those were lying in the doorway. All it had left was its body. [5]That is the reason why, ever since that time, the priests of Dagon and everyone else who enters the temple of Dagon in Ashdod do not step on the doorway {where the hands and head of Dagon were lying}.

[6]Then Yahweh made the people of Ashdod suffer greatly. A plague {of mice} destroyed their crops, and many people in the city and in the surrounding region got unhealthy growths on their skin. [7]When the people of Ashdod saw what was happening, they cried out, "The god of the Israelites is severely punishing us and our god Dagon. So we cannot keep his sacred chest here!" [8]They summoned the five rulers of the Philistines and asked them, "What should we do with the sacred chest of the God of the Israelites?"

The rulers replied, "Send the sacred chest to the city of Gath." So they moved it to Gath. [9]But when they took the sacred chest to Gath, Yahweh made the people of that city suffer as well. This caused very great distress. Throughout the city, people of all ages died, and many others got unhealthy skin growths. [10]So the people of Gath moved the sacred chest to the city of Ekron.

But when some men from Gath carried the sacred chest into Ekron, the people there protested. They told the men, "You are going to cause us and our families to die by bringing the sacred chest of the god of the Israelites here!" [11]So the people of Ekron also summoned the Philistine rulers. When they came, the people said to them, "Send this sacred chest of the god of the Israelites back to its own place! Otherwise, it will cause us and our families to die!" There was great distress throughout the city because so many people were dying. God was punishing them very severely. [12]Some of the people in Ekron had already died, and the rest of the people were suffering badly because of unhealthy growths on their skin. The people of the city were wailing so loudly that other people far away could hear them.

Chapter 6

[1]The people of Philistia kept Yahweh's sacred chest in their area for seven months. [2]Then they summoned their priests and their fortunetellers. They asked them, "We want to know how we should treat the sacred chest of Yahweh. Tell us what gift we should send with it back to its own land."

[3]Those men replied, "Since you are going to return the sacred chest of Israel's God, you must send a gift with it to show him that you are sorry for taking it. If you do that and your unhealthy skin growths go away, you will know for sure that it was Israel's God who was making you suffer, because you took his sacred chest."

[4]The people of Philistia asked, "What kind of gift should we send?"

Those men replied, "Since you people and your five rulers have suffered in the same ways, send the same number of gifts as the number of your rulers. Make five gold models of the unhealthy growths on your skin and five gold models of mice. [5]Make models that represent the unhealthy skin growths and the mice that have been devouring your crops. Make them in order to honor the God of the Israelite people. If you do that, perhaps he will stop punishing you, your gods, and your land. [6]Do not be stubborn as Pharaoh and the Egyptians were. Remember that Yahweh finally made them suffer more than they could bear, and that they then allowed the Israelites to leave their land.

7So this is what we advise you to do. Build a brand-new cart. Then get two cows that have very recently given birth to calves. They must be cows on which no one has ever put a yoke. Hitch those cows to the new cart. But keep their calves from following them by putting them securely in their pens. **8**Put their God's sacred chest on the cart along with the gold models you are sending to him. Put them in a small box alongside the sacred chest. These gold objects will be an offering to acknowledge to the God of the Israelites that he was right to punish you for taking his sacred chest. Then send the cows down the road and let them go wherever they want. **9**Then watch the cart as the cows pull it. If they pull it back into the territory of the Israelites, to the town of Beth Shemesh, then we will know that it was their God who caused these terrible plagues to afflict us. But if the cows do not pull the cart there, then we will know that the God of the Israelites has not been punishing us for taking his sacred chest. We will know that it was just a coincidence that we got unhealthy skin growths and mice ate our crops at the same time."

10So the people did what the priests and diviners told them to do. They got two cows that had just had calves and were nursing them. They hitched them to a new cart that they made. But they put those calves securely in their pens. **11**Then they put Yahweh's sacred chest in the cart along with a box containing the gold models they had made of the mice and the skin growths. **12**Then the cows started walking, and they went straight down the road that led to Beth Shemesh. {Even though no one had ever yoked them before,} they did not pull in different directions. They were mooing the whole time {because they were distressed about their calves,} but they kept going forward down the road. The five rulers of the Philistine cities followed the cows until they reached the outskirts of Beth Shemesh.

13At that time, the people of Beth Shemesh were harvesting wheat in the valley outside their city. When the cows came along the road, they looked up and saw the sacred chest on the cart the cows were pulling. They were extremely happy when they saw it. **14-15**The cows pulled the cart into the field of a man whose name was Joshua who lived in Beth Shemesh. They stopped alongside a large rock. Several men from the tribe of Levi lifted from the cart the sacred chest and the box next to it that contained the gold models. They put all those things on the large rock. Then the people smashed the cart and kindled a fire with the wood from it. They slaughtered the cows and burned their bodies on the fire completely as an offering to Yahweh. That day the people of Beth Shemesh offered to Yahweh many sacrifices that they completely burned and many other sacrifices. **16**The five rulers of the Philistines watched the Israelites do these things. Then they returned to Ekron on that same day.

17The Philistines had sent five gold models of skin growths as an offering to Yahweh to acknowledge that he was right to punish them for taking his sacred chest. The five gold models represented the people of their five cities: Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron. **18**The five gold models of mice were gifts from the people of the five cities that the five Philistine leaders rule. This included the people who lived in those cities and those who lived in the surrounding towns, all the way to {the border between Philistia and Israel that} the large rock {at Beth Shemesh marked}. People would later give that rock the name Abel. Men from the tribe of Levi placed the sacred chest on top of that rock. It is still there in the field that belonged to the man whose name was Joshua who lived in Beth Shemesh.

19But some of the people who lived in Beth Shemesh looked into Yahweh's sacred chest. Because of that, Yahweh caused 50,070 of them to die. The others who lived there mourned greatly because Yahweh had killed so many of those people. **20**Then the people who lived in Beth Shemesh said, "Since Yahweh is such a holy God, he will eventually kill all of us {to punish us for being sinful} if his sacred chest remains here! We must send his sacred chest to the people who live in some other place!"

21They sent messengers to the people who lived in the city of Kiriath Jearim. They told them, "The people of Philistia have sent Yahweh's sacred chest back to us. Come here and take it to your city."

Chapter 7

1When the men of Kiriath Jearim received the message, they came to Beth Shemesh and took the sacred chest of Yahweh. They took it to the house of a man whose name was Abinadab. He lived on a hill. They gave Abinadab's son Eleazar the special duty of taking care of the chest.

2The sacred chest remained in Kiriath Jearim for a long time, for 20 years. During that time, the Israelite people were very sorry that Yahweh was not helping them anymore.

3Then Samuel said to all the Israelite people, “If you truly want Yahweh to be your God again, you must get rid of the idols you have that represent foreign gods. You must also get rid of the statues you have that represent the goddess Ashtoreth. You must resolve to worship only Yahweh. If you do that, he will enable you to stop the Philistines from oppressing you.” **4**So the Israelites got rid of all their statues of the gods Baal and Ashtoreth, and they began to worship only Yahweh.

5Then Samuel told them, “I want you Israelites to assemble at Mizpah. I will pray to Yahweh for you there.” **6**So the Israelites assembled at Mizpah. They got water from a well and poured it out on the ground in Yahweh’s presence. They did not eat any food on that day. They confessed that they had sinned against Yahweh. There at Mizpah Samuel settled disputes among the Israelites and made sure that they were obeying Yahweh.

7When the Philistines learned that the Israelite people had assembled at Mizpah, their rulers led their armies to attack the Israelites. When the Israelites learned that the Philistines were approaching them to attack them, they became very afraid. **8**They told Samuel, “Please keep on praying to Yahweh our God for us so that he will rescue us from the Philistine army!” **9**So Samuel took a young lamb that was still nursing, and he killed it and offered it to Yahweh as a sacrifice by burning it up entirely on the altar. Then he pleaded with Yahweh to help the Israelites, and Yahweh did what he asked.

10While Samuel was still burning the lamb as an offering, the Philistine army came near to attack the Israelites. But Yahweh caused it to thunder very loudly. The soldiers in the Philistine army became so frightened that they could no longer fight effectively. So the Israelite soldiers were able to defeat them completely. **11**The Israelite men rushed out of Mizpah and killed many Philistine soldiers who were trying to run away. They chased them all the way to the bottom of the hill on which people had built the town of Beth Kar.

12After the battle, Samuel got a large stone and set it up between the city of Mizpah and the rocky cliff of Shen. He named the stone Ebenezer. He said, “Yahweh has helped us to defeat our enemies this far.” **13**So the Israelites defeated the Philistines, and they stopped invading the land of Israel. During the time that Samuel was alive, Yahweh kept powerfully helping the Israelites defend themselves against the Philistines.

14The Philistines had previously captured some towns that belonged to the Israelites. But the Israelite army was now able to recapture those towns. They were around the Philistine cities of Ekron and Gath. The Israelites recaptured the whole area right up to the limits of those cities. The Amorites also did not attack the Israelites during this time.

15Samuel continued to be the leader of the Israelite people until he died. **16**Every year Samuel traveled around to the cities of Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah. In those cities, he listened to disputes between people and settled them. **17**After he settled disputes in each of those cities, he would return to Ramah, where he lived. He also listened to people’s disputes there and settled them. He built an altar at Ramah {so that he could offer sacrifices to Yahweh}.

Chapter 8

1When Samuel became old, he appointed his sons to lead the people of Israel. **2**Samuel had two sons. Joel was his older son and Abijah was his younger son. They settled people’s disputes in the town of Beersheba. **3**But Joel and Abijah were not honest like their father. They only wanted to get a lot of money. They accepted bribes, and they did not make honest decisions about people’s disputes.

4Finally, the Israelite leaders met in the town of Ramah to discuss the matter with Samuel. **5**The leaders said to Samuel, “Now listen! You are now old, and your sons are not honest like you. So give us a king to rule over us, like the kings that other countries have!”

6Samuel thought it was wrong for them to ask him to give them a king to rule them. So he prayed to Yahweh about
it. **7**Yahweh answered him, “Do everything that these leaders have asked you to do. But recognize that by asking
for a king, they are not really refusing to have your family continue to lead them. They are actually refusing to have
me continue to be their king. **8**This is just like what they have been doing ever since I brought them out of Egypt.
They have rejected me and worshiped other gods. Now they are also rejecting you in the same way. **9**So this is what
I want you to do. Appoint a king for them as they have asked. But warn them clearly and explain to them what
privileges this king will claim for himself!”

10So Samuel told the Israelite leaders who were asking him for a king what Yahweh had told him. **11**He said, “If a
king rules over you, this is what he will do to you. He will force many of your sons to serve in his army as chariot
drivers or as soldiers on horseback. He will make a large group of your sons run in front of his chariot. **12**He will
make some of your sons officers who will command groups of a thousand soldiers or groups of fifty soldiers. But
he will force others to plow his fields and then later harvest his crops. He will force still others to make military
weapons and equipment for his chariots. **13**The king will also make some of your daughters work for him. They will
have to make perfumes and cook food and bake bread for him. **14**He will seize your best fields and vineyards and
olive groves so that he can give them to his attendants. **15**The king will take one tenth of the grain and wine that
you produce and distribute it among his own officers and attendants. **16**He will also claim your best male and
female servants and the strong young men in your household and make them work for him. He will also take your
donkeys and use them to carry loads for him. **17**He will take one tenth of your sheep and goats. It will be as if you
are his slaves. **18**When all of this happens, you will complain loudly about the king whom you yourselves have
chosen. But when that happens, Yahweh will make you keep serving the king you are complaining about.”

19But despite everything Samuel told them, the people stubbornly insisted that they did not want any ruler other
than a king. **20**They told him, “We want to be like the other nations. We want a king to rule us and to lead our
soldiers to fight against our enemies.”

21When Samuel heard everything that the people had said, he repeated it to Yahweh for him to hear. **22**Yahweh
answered him, “Do what they are asking you to do. Appoint someone to be their king.” So Samuel told the Israelite
elders that they could all go home, because he would arrange for them to have a king.

Chapter 9

1Now there was a rich and influential man whose name was Kish. He belonged to the tribe of Benjamin. Kish was
the son of Abiel, the grandson of Zeror, the great-grandson of Bekorath, and the great-great-grandson of Aphiah.
Kish lived within the territory of the tribe of Benjamin. **2**Kish had a son whose name was Saul. He was a handsome
young man. In fact, he was one of the most attractive Israelite young men. He was also much taller than most
other men.

3Saul’s father Kish owned some female donkeys, and one day they wandered off. So Kish told Saul, “Take one of the
servants with you and go and look for those donkeys.” **4**So Saul did that. He took a servant, and they walked
through the hilly area where the descendants of Ephraim lived, and then they went through the regions of
Shalishah and Shaalim, and then they went through all the region belonging to the tribe of Benjamin, but they
could not find the donkeys.

5Finally, they came to the region of Zuph. Then Saul said to the servant, “We should go back home. If we do not do
that, my father will stop worrying about the donkeys and start worrying about us.”

6But the servant told Saul, “I have another idea. Please listen to it. One of God’s prophets lives in this city. People
respect him very much because everything he predicts comes true. Let us go and speak with him. Perhaps he can
tell us where we should go to find the donkeys.”

7Saul replied to the servant, “I agree that we should go and speak with him, but what can we give him as a gift? We
have no more food in our sacks, and I do not know of something else we could give him. Do we have anything else
with us?”

8In response, the servant told Saul, “Actually, I do have a small piece of silver that I can give to the prophet. {That
way we can speak with him} and he will tell us where we should go to find the donkeys.” **9-11**Saul told his servant,
“That is a good idea. Let us go and speak with him.” So they went to the city where the prophet lived. As they were
going up the hill into the city, they met some young women who were coming out of the city to get some water
from a well. They asked the women, “Is the seer currently in the city?” (They said that because at that time, when
people in Israel wanted a message from God, they would say, “Let us go and speak with the seer.” They used the
term “seer” to refer to the same kind of person whom people now call a “prophet.”) **12**The women replied, “Yes, he
is in the city. In fact, he is just ahead of you. If you walk fast, you will catch up with him. He came back to the city
this very day because the people will be gathering today on the hill to worship God, and he is going to bless the
sacrifice of the animal that will provide the meat for this festival. **13**You should find him just inside the city. He will
not have gone up the hill yet to take part in the festival, because {first the people will prepare the feast, and then}
he will come and bless the sacrifice. The guests will only start eating after he does that. So if you hurry, you will find
him there right now.”

14So Saul and the servant went to the city. As they were on their way in, amazingly, Samuel was coming from the
opposite direction and met them. He was on his way to the hill where the people were going to hold their festival.

15On the previous day, Yahweh had told Samuel, **16**“I will arrange for a man to arrive here at this time tomorrow
from the land where the descendants of Benjamin live. I want you to pour olive oil on his head to show that I have
chosen him to be the leader of my Israelite people. I have listened to them as they have called out to me for help,
and I have seen how they are suffering. This man will rescue my people from the control of the Philistines.”

17When Samuel saw Saul, Yahweh said to him, “This is the man I told you about yesterday! He is the one who will
rule my people!”

18As Saul was going in the city gate and Samuel was coming out of it, Saul went over to Samuel {without realizing
who he was} and asked him, “Would you please tell me where the house of the seer is?”

19Samuel replied, “I am the seer. Now go ahead of me with your servant to the hill where the people are going to
hold their festival. Both of you will be my guests today at the feast. Tomorrow morning I will tell you everything you
want to know, and then I will send you home. **20**Also, do not worry anymore about those donkeys of yours that
wandered away a couple of days ago. Someone has found them. But let us consider that the Israelites are looking
for a king. You are the king they are looking for. You and your extended family will rule the Israelites.

21Saul replied, “I am from the tribe of Benjamin, which is the smallest of all the Israelite tribes! Beyond that, my
clan is the least important clan in that tribe! So I do not understand why you have spoken to me about becoming
the king of Israel.”

22But {even though Saul had objected}, Samuel brought Saul and his servant into the large room where the feast
would be. About 30 people were guests at the feast, but Samuel had Saul and his servant sit in the seats where the
most important guests would sit. **23**Then Samuel told the cook, “Serve {my guest here} the special piece of meat
that I gave you and that I told you to set aside.”

24So the cook brought the leg he had set aside, with its adjoining meat, and he served it to Saul. Samuel said to
Saul, “We have just served you the special portion that we set aside for you. Please go ahead and start eating it.
When I told the cook that I had invited people to this feast, I also told him to save this portion of the meat so that
you could have it when you came.” So Saul ate the festive meal that day as Samuel’s guest.

25After they finished eating, they returned to the city. Then Samuel took Saul up onto the flat roof of his house and
talked with him there.

26Saul slept that night in a sheltered bed on the roof. Early the next morning, as the sun was rising, Samuel called up to him, “Get up! It is time for me to send you back home.” Once Saul had gotten up, he and Samuel left the house together.

27When they got to the edge of the city, Samuel told Saul to send his servant on ahead of them. After the servant left, Samuel said to Saul, “I want you to stay here for a few minutes so that I can give you a message I have received from God for you.”

Chapter 10

1Then Samuel took a small jar of olive oil and poured some of it on Saul’s head. Then he kissed Saul {on the cheek}. He told him, “I am doing this because Yahweh has chosen you to be the leader of his Israelite people. **2**When you leave here today and start to return home, you will meet two men near Rachel’s tomb near the town of Zelzah in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin. They will say to you, ‘Someone has found the donkeys that you were looking for. But now your father is more worried about you. He is saying that he is concerned that you have become lost yourself, and he does not know how to find you.’

3After leaving Zelzah and continuing your journey, you will arrive at the large oak tree near the town of Tabor. There you will see three men coming toward you. They will be on their way to worship God at Bethel. One of them will be leading three young goats. Another one will be carrying three loaves of bread. The last one will be carrying a container of wine. **4**They will ask how you are doing, and then they will offer you two of the loaves of bread. Accept them.

5Finally you will get {back home} to the city of Gibeah where there is a hill on which people worship God and where there is also a camp where Philistine soldiers stay. As you enter the city, you will meet a group of prophets. They will be coming down from the place of worship that is on top of the hill. Prophets playing music on harps, tambourines, flutes, and lyres will be leading them. The prophets will be speaking and singing as God inspires them. **6**When you meet them, the Spirit of Yahweh will powerfully influence you, and you too will speak and sing as God inspires you. This will affect you so much that you will become like a different person. **7**After these things happen, God will be helping you, so do what you think is the right thing to do in each situation.

8But I would like you to meet me at the city of Gilgal. Listen carefully. I will come there and offer some sacrifices that I will burn completely and other sacrifices for a festive meal that we will share. Wait one week for me to arrive. When I come, I will tell you what other things you should do.”

9Just as Saul started to walk away from Samuel, God changed Saul’s inner being. And all the things that Samuel had predicted happened that same day. **10**When Saul and his servant arrived at Gibeah, right away they met a group of prophets. God’s Spirit influenced Saul powerfully, and he began to speak and sing as the prophets were also doing. **11**The people who had known Saul previously were surprised to see that he was speaking and singing as the prophets were doing. They said to each other, “How has this happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul really one of the prophets?”

12One of the men who lived there replied, “These other men did not become prophets because of who their fathers were.” And that is why, {when a person achieves something that people would not have expected based on his background,} people say, “Is Saul really one of the prophets?” **13**After Saul finished speaking and singing as God inspired him, he went up to the hill near the city where the people worshiped God.

14When Saul’s uncle saw him there, he asked him and his servant, “Where have you been?” Saul replied, “We went to look for the donkeys. When we could not find them, we went to ask Samuel if he could tell us where they were.”

15Saul’s uncle asked, “What did Samuel tell you?”

16Saul answered, “He assured us that someone had found the donkeys.” But Saul did not tell his uncle what Samuel had said to him about becoming the king of Israel.

17Then Samuel told the people of Israel to gather at Mizpah to hear a message from Yahweh. **18**After they arrived,
he said to them, “Yahweh, the God whom we Israelite people worship, has a message for you. He says, ‘I brought
you Israelite people out of Egypt. I rescued your ancestors from the power of the rulers of Egypt, and I have
rescued you from all the other kings who have oppressed you since then.’ **19**But even though he rescues you from
all the difficulties you encounter, now you no longer want God to be the one who rules you. Instead, you have
asked him to select a man to rule you as king. {So that Yahweh can indicate what man he is choosing,} I want
representatives of your tribes and clans to come forward and stand here in the presence of Yahweh.’”

20When the representatives of the Israelite tribes approached, Samuel threw a lot, and God made it indicate that
he had chosen someone from the tribe of Benjamin. **21**Then Samuel had the representatives of the clans of the
tribe of Benjamin come forward. Samuel threw another lot, and God made it indicate that he had chosen someone
from the clan of Matri. Samuel threw another lot, and God made it indicate that he had chosen Saul son of Kish
from that clan. But when they looked for Saul, no one could find him. **22**So they asked Yahweh, “Can we not find
Saul because he has not arrived here yet?” Yahweh replied, “I will tell you where he is. He is hiding under the
baggage.”

23So they quickly went there and found Saul. They had him stand in front of all the people. They observed how
much taller he was than other men{, and this impressed them}. **24**Then Samuel said to all the people there, “This is
the king whom Yahweh has chosen for you. Certainly he is taller and stronger than any other Israelite!” All the
people shouted, “May God keep this king alive!”

25Then Samuel told the people what the responsibilities of the king would be and what responsibilities they would
have toward him. He wrote all those things in a scroll. He placed the scroll for safekeeping in a location where
people worshiped Yahweh. Then Samuel sent all the people home.

26Saul returned to his home in the city of Gibeah. A group of strong soldiers decided to accompany Saul
continually. They did that because God had motivated each of them to do it. **27**But some bad men said, “A man like
him will not be able to save us from our enemies!” They did not think he would make a good king, and they refused
to give him any gifts {to show that they would be loyal to him}. But {even though Saul knew about their insult,} he
said nothing about it at the time.

Chapter 11

1Then Nahash king of the Ammonites led his army to attack the city of Jabesh in the region of Gilead. The leaders
of the people who lived in that city went to speak with Nahash. They told him, “We want to make a peace treaty
with you. We are all willing to become your subjects.”

2Nahash replied, “I will make a peace treaty with you on one condition. You must allow my soldiers to gouge out
your right eyes. This will bring shame on all the Israelites {because it will show that they were not able to defend
you}.”

3The leaders of Jabesh replied, “Please do not attack us for the next seven days. During that time, we will send
messengers throughout the land of Israel {to ask for help}. If no one comes to help us, then we will surrender to
you.”

4{Nahash agreed, and} the messengers went {throughout Israel, including to} to Gibeah, the city where Saul lived,
and they told the people there about the situation. Everyone started to cry loudly. **5**Just then Saul returned home.
He had been plowing his field with his oxen. {He heard the noise and} he asked, “Why are all the people crying so
loudly?” Then someone told him what the messengers from Jabesh had reported.

6Then God’s Spirit influenced Saul powerfully. He became extremely angry when he heard what Nahash wanted to
do. **7**Saul took two of his oxen and killed them and cut them into pieces. Then he sent messengers carrying those
pieces throughout the land of Israel to tell people this message: “Saul says that if anyone refuses to come with him
and Samuel to fight against the Ammonite army, he will cut that person’s oxen into pieces, just as he has cut these

oxen into pieces!" The men of Israel realized that Yahweh wanted them to go and fight the Ammonites and that Yahweh would be angry with them and punish them if they did not. So the Israelite men all agreed to fight. **8**Saul assembled his army at the city of Bezek. When he counted the troops, he learned that there were 30, 000 soldiers there from the tribe of Judah and 300, 000 soldiers from the other Israelite tribes.

9So Saul and Samuel sent the messengers back to the people at Jabesh Gilead to tell them, "We will come and rescue you tomorrow by the middle of the morning." The messengers went and told this to the people of Jabesh. They became very happy when they heard this news. **10**Then the leaders of Jabesh told Nahash, "We will surrender to you tomorrow, and then you can do to us whatever you want."

11That night Saul divided his troops into three groups. They marched all night and arrived at the city before the sun rose the next morning. They attacked the camp of the Ammonite soldiers {from three different directions}. By noontime they had killed most of them. Those who survived ran away, and none of them regrouped to continue fighting.

12Then the soldiers said to Samuel, "Now who were those men who said that they did not want Saul to be our king? Bring them here so that we can kill them!"

13But Saul replied, "No, we are not going to execute anyone today, because on this day Yahweh has saved us Israelite people from our enemies. {This is a day to rejoice, not to kill anyone.}"

14Then Samuel said to the people, "Let us all go to Gilgal, and there we will proclaim again that Saul is our king." **15**So they went to Gilgal. In that place where people worshiped Yahweh and considered that he was present, they proclaimed again that Saul was their king. Then they offered sacrifices there to show Yahweh how grateful they were for his help. And Saul and all the other Israelite people at the gathering were very happy.

Chapter 12

1Then Samuel told all the Israelite people, "Now listen. I have given you a king to rule you. So I have now done everything you asked me to do. **2**And that king is now ruling you, as you can see. I have become too old to keep being the leader of Israel. You can tell that from my gray hair. You can also tell that from the fact that my sons are fully grown. I have been your leader ever since I was a boy. **3**If I have wronged anyone, tell me now while I stand before you. Do that while Yahweh is listening and while the king whom he has chosen is listening. Have I stolen an ox or donkey from anyone during all those years? Have I cheated anyone? Have I treated anyone badly? Have I accepted a bribe from anyone in exchange for ignoring the wrong things he was doing? If I have done any of these things, tell me, and I will repay anything I took."

4They replied, "No, you have never cheated anyone or oppressed anyone or accepted a bribe from anyone."

5Then Samuel told them, "Yahweh has heard you say this, and the king whom he has chosen has also heard you say this just now. You agree that I have not taken anything from anyone. {So you must also agree that they may punish anyone who later claims differently.}" The Israelites replied, "We acknowledge that Yahweh and the king have heard us say this {and that they may punish anyone who later claims differently}!"

6Samuel then told them, "Yahweh was the one who appointed Moses and Aaron to lead our ancestors. He is the one who rescued our ancestors from slavery in Egypt. **7**Now while Yahweh is listening, stand there as defendants while I make the case that you should not have asked for a king instead of trusting Yahweh to rescue you. I will do that by reminding you of all the times when Yahweh rescued you and your ancestors.

8When the Egyptians forced the Israelites to serve them as slaves, our ancestors pleaded with Yahweh to help them. Yahweh sent Moses and Aaron to rescue them from slavery and to bring them to this land, where they settled.

9But our ancestors stopped being loyal to Yahweh as their God. So he allowed Sisera to defeat them. Sisera was the
commander of the army of King Jabin, who ruled from the city of Hazor. Yahweh also allowed the armies of the
Philistines and of the king of Moab to defeat our ancestors. **10**Then our ancestors pleaded with Yahweh to help
them. They admitted, 'Yahweh, we have sinned by forsaking you. We have worshiped idols that represent the god
Baal and the goddess Ashtoreth. But if you rescue us from our enemies, we will worship you alone.' **11**So Yahweh
sent men such as Jerubbaal, Bedan, Jephthah, and me. We rescued you from the control of the enemies that
surrounded you. As a result, you were able to live safely in this land again.

12But when you saw that King Nahash of Ammon had come with his army to attack you, you were afraid. So you
came to me and said, 'Now we want a {warrior} king to lead us.' You said that even though Yahweh your God was
already your king! **13**Nevertheless, Yahweh has now appointed a king for you. So look, here is the king you wanted
and asked for. **14**If you respect Yahweh and worship him as your God, and if you do what he tells you to do and not
disobey what he says, then Yahweh your God will protect you and your king from your enemies. **15**But if you do not
do what Yahweh tells you to do and you disobey what he says, then he will help your enemies to defeat you, just as
he did to our ancestors.

16Now stand here quietly and look at the great thing that Yahweh is about to do while you watch. **17**It is currently
the time when you harvest your wheat crop {and ordinarily there is no rain}. But I will ask Yahweh to send a
thunderstorm and make it rain. When you see that, you will realize that Yahweh considers that you have done a
very wicked thing by requesting a king of your own."

18Then Samuel prayed to Yahweh, and Yahweh caused a thunderstorm to happen right then. This made all the
people very afraid of Yahweh and of Samuel.

19They cried out to Samuel, "We have sinned further {against Yahweh} by wickedly asking for a king of our own! So
pray for us and ask Yahweh, the God you represent, not to kill us for doing that!"

20Samuel told them, "Do not be afraid! You have done this evil thing just as I described, but do not stop living the
way Yahweh wants you to live. Instead, serve Yahweh with complete commitment. **21**Do not abandon Yahweh and
worship useless idols. Because they are truly useless, they can not benefit you or rescue you from your enemies.
22Yahweh wants everyone in the world to know what a faithful God he is. So he will not abandon us after he gladly
chose us to be his own people. **23**For my part, you can be sure that I will keep praying for you. If I did not, I would
be sinning against Yahweh. I will also continue to teach you what the right things are to do. **24**But you must honor
Yahweh and serve him genuinely with complete commitment. Bear in mind all the great things that he has done
for you. **25**But you can be sure that if you do wicked things, Yahweh will destroy you and your king!"

Chapter 13

1Saul was 30 years old when he began to rule the Israelites as their king, and he ruled them for 42 years.

2{After returning from defeating the Ammonites at Jabesh Gilead,} Saul chose 3,000 of the Israelite men who had
fought them to become a regular army. He sent the other men back home. Of the soldiers Saul chose, 2,000 stayed
with him at Michmash and in the hilly area near the city of Bethel. The other 1,000 stayed with {his son} Jonathan at
the city of Gibeah within the territory of the tribe of Benjamin.

3Jonathan and the men who were with him attacked the Philistine soldiers who had camped at Geba. The Philistine
rulers heard what they did {and planned to attack in response}. Saul {expected this and} sent messengers to blow
horns throughout Israel and tell the people what was happening. **4**The other Israelites heard the news that Saul's
army had attacked a camp of Philistine soldiers and that this had made the Philistines very angry with the
Israelites. The messengers told the rest of the fighting men to join Saul and his soldiers at Gilgal.

5Then the Philistines mobilized their army to attack the Israelites. The Philistines had 3,000 chariots and 6,000
soldiers on horseback. They seemed to have too many footsoldiers to count, like the grains of sand on the

seashore. The Philistines came and set up their tents near the city of Michmash, to the east of Beth Aven. **6**The Israelite soldiers realized that they were in a very dangerous situation because the Philistines would be able to attack them from there and harm them greatly. So many of them {fled and} hid in caves or bushes or climbed up onto high rocks or hid in ditches or holes in the ground. **7**Some of them crossed the Jordan River and went to the area where the descendants of Gad lived and to the region of Gilead.

But Saul stayed at Gilgal. All the soldiers who were with him were shaking because they were so afraid. **8**Samuel had told Saul to wait seven days for him to come and offer sacrifices, and so he did. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal during that time, and meanwhile many of the soldiers in Saul's remaining army were leaving him and running away. **9**So Saul told the soldiers, "Bring me an animal that I can burn completely on the altar {to express our complete dedication to Yahweh}. Also bring me animals that we can sacrifice {and whose meat we can share at a meal to celebrate and thank Yahweh for the victory we expect he will enable us to win}." So his soldiers brought him these animals, and he burned the first one completely on the altar. **10**When Saul had nearly completed burning this animal, suddenly Samuel arrived. Saul went over to greet him.

11Samuel {saw what Saul had done, and he} said to Saul, "You should not have sacrificed that animal yourself!" Saul replied, "I saw that my soldiers were leaving me and running away. You did not come here by the time you said you would come. Meanwhile, the Philistines had mobilized their army at Michmash {and were threatening us dangerously}.

12So I thought, 'Soon the Philistine army will attack us here at Gilgal, but I have not yet asked Yahweh to help us.' So I felt it was necessary to offer the burnt offering myself."

13Samuel told Saul, "That was a very foolish thing to do! You did not obey what Yahweh, your God, commanded about sacrifices. If you had obeyed him, Yahweh would have allowed you and your descendants to rule Israel for a long time. **14**But now, after you die, none of your descendants will become king. That is because you have not obeyed what Yahweh told you to do, Yahweh has found someone else who will do what he wants him to do. He has decided to make that person the next king of Israel."

15Then Samuel left Gilgal and went to the city of Gibeah that is in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin. Saul counted the soldiers he still had with him and he discovered that there were only about 600 of them who had not run away.

16Saul and his son Jonathan and the soldiers who were with them went to an area near the city of Geba in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin and set up their tents there. The Philistine army had set up their tents at Michmash. **17**The Philistines sent out three groups of soldiers to make raids on Israelite towns. One group went north toward the city of Ophrah in the region of Shual. **18**Another group went west towards the city of Beth Horon. The third group went east toward the area above the Zeboim Valley, beyond which there is a desolate area.

19The Philistines did not want the Israelites (whom they called Hebrews) to be able to make any swords or spears. So they did not allow any Israelites to be metalworkers. **20**As a result, whenever the Israelites needed someone to sharpen their plow blades, picks, axes, or sickles, they had to bring them to a Philistine man who could sharpen them. **21**The Israelites had to pay about eight grams of silver to get such a man to sharpen their plow blades, picks, forks with three prongs, or sickles or to straighten the goads they used to drive their oxen.

22As a result, none of the 600 men who were with Saul and Jonathan had swords or spears that they could use to fight the Philistines. Only Saul and Jonathan, his son, had swords and spears.

23The Philistines sent some of their soldiers to guard the mountain pass outside Michmash.

Chapter 14

1One day, Saul's son Jonathan said to the young man who carried his weapons, "I want to attack the Philistine soldiers who are staying on the other side of the valley from us, and I want you to help me do that." But Jonathan did not tell his father what he wanted to do.

2Saul was staying in the outskirts of the city of Gibeah, under the pomegranate tree in the neighborhood of Migron. He had about 600 soldiers with him. **3**Ahijah the priest was also there, wearing a sacred apron.

Ahijah's father Ahitub was the older brother of Ichabod. Ahijah's grandfather was Phinehas, and his great-grandfather was Eli. Eli had been Yahweh's priest at Shiloh. None of the soldiers knew that Jonathan had left the Israelite camp.

4Jonathan recognized a route that he and the young man could follow to cross through the valley that was between them and the Philistine army. But they would have to climb over a huge rock when they first went into the valley, and they would have to climb over another huge rock as they came out of it. People called one of the rocks Bozez, and they called the other rock Seneh. **5**Bozez would be at the north end of their route, as they approached Michmash, and Seneh would be at the south end of their route, as they were leaving Geba.

6Jonathan said to the young man who carried his weapons, "Come with me. We will go to where those pagans have set up their tents. Perhaps Yahweh will help us. It does not matter to him that there are only two of us, rather than many soldiers. Yahweh can still enable us to defeat them."

7The young man who was carrying Jonathan's weapons said, "Go ahead and do what you are planning. Go across the valley, and I will come with you and help you do what you want to do."

8Then Jonathan said, "Very well then, come with me. As we are crossing the valley to where the Philistine army is, we will allow their soldiers to see us. **9**If they {see us and} call out to us, 'You two stay there until we come down to you,' we will stay where we are and not try to climb up and fight them. **10**But if they {see us and} call out to us, 'Come up here,' that will show us that Yahweh is going to enable us to defeat them. In that case, we will climb up and fight them."

11While the two of them were crossing the valley, the Philistine soldiers noticed them coming. They said to each other, "Look! Some Hebrews are crawling out of the holes in which they were hiding!" **12**Then some Philistine soldiers called out to Jonathan and the young man who carried his weapons, "Come up here, and we will show you how real soldiers fight!"

Jonathan said to the young man who was with him, "{Because they said that,} now we know that Yahweh is going to help us to defeat them! So let us climb up and fight them. I will go first." **13**So Jonathan climbed up out of the valley to the Philistine camp. He had to use both his hands and his feet because the ground was so steep. The young man climbed up after him. When Jonathan got to the top, he fought all the Philistine soldiers who approached him, and he killed them. The young man followed Jonathan into the camp of the Philistines, and he also fought and killed their soldiers. **14**In this initial attack, the two of them killed about 20 soldiers as they advanced about 30 meters into the Philistine camp.

15This made the other Philistine soldiers in that camp panic. {When they ran back to the main camp at Michmash and described what happened}, the soldiers in the main camp also panicked. {When those soldiers told} soldiers in other camps and the groups of soldiers who were making raids, they also panicked. Then God caused the ground to shake, and all of them became even more afraid.

16Saul's soldiers in the city of Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin included lookouts. {When they heard the noise in the Philistine camp,} they looked to see what was happening. They saw that the Philistine army was dispersing and that its soldiers were running away in all directions. **17**{Saul realized that some of his soldiers must have attacked the Philistine army.} So he told his officers, "Check to see which of our soldiers are not here." So they checked, and they found that Jonathan and the young man who carried his weapons were not there.

18Now the Israelite army had the sacred chest with it at that time. So Saul told Ahijah the priest, “Bring the sacred chest here {so that I can use it to consult Yahweh}.” **19**But while Saul was still talking to Ahijah, the noise coming from the Philistine camp kept getting louder. So Saul told him, “Stop what you are doing.”

20Then Saul gathered his whole army and they went to fight the Philistines. They found that the Philistine army had become so disorganized that its soldiers were killing each other with their swords. **21**Some of the Hebrew soldiers had earlier deserted their army and joined the Philistine army. They were in different areas throughout the Philistine camp. But now those men helped Saul and Jonathan and the other Israelite soldiers fight against the Philistines. **22**Some other Israelite soldiers had also deserted and hidden in the hilly area where the tribe of Ephraim lived. But when they heard that the Philistine soldiers were running away, they came and joined the other Israelite soldiers and also chased the Philistine soldiers. **23**So Yahweh rescued the Israelites on that day. The Israelite soldiers chased the Philistines all the way to the city of Beth Aven and beyond it.

24But {the Israelites did not win as great a victory as they could have, because} the Israelite soldiers became weak {from hunger} that day. That was because Saul had made the soldiers swear something. He had made them all say, “May Yahweh make bad things happen to any of us who eats any food before this evening, before we get revenge on our enemies!” So none of the Israelite soldiers ate any food{, and this made them weak}.

25{As} the Israelite troops {kept pursuing the Philistines, they} went into a forest where bees had made honeycombs in the trees. Honey from those combs was flowing onto the ground. **26**When the Israelite troops came into that forest, they saw the honey flowing. But because they were afraid of the curse that Saul had shouted out, none of them ate any of the honey. **27**But {because he had left the camp early that morning,} Jonathan did not know that his father had made the soldiers swear that they would not eat any food before evening. So when he saw a honeycomb in a tree, he reached out with the end of the spear he was holding and collected some honey. He ate that honey, and it was evident from his appearance that afterward he felt stronger.

28But one of the Israelite soldiers saw him eating the honey and said to him, “Your father made all the soldiers swear not to eat any food today. So {none of us has eaten anything, and as a result} we soldiers are weak.” **29**Jonathan exclaimed, “My father has made things more difficult for the soldiers in our army! You can tell from my appearance that I feel stronger after eating some of this honey. **30**If only he had allowed us today to eat some of the food that we captured from our enemies while we were pursuing them! Then we would have {felt stronger and} been able to kill many more of those Philistine soldiers!”

31The Israelite soldiers pursued and killed Philistine soldiers all that day, from their camp near Michmash all the way west to the city of Aijalon. But the Israelite soldiers became very weak {because they had not eaten anything}. **32**The Israelites had captured many sheep and cattle, including their calves, that the Philistine soldiers had abandoned. {Because they were extremely hungry,} they acted like wild birds gobbling up the carcass of an animal. They butchered some of those animals right on the ground, and they ate the meat without first draining the blood from the animals. **33**One of the soldiers told Saul, “Look! The soldiers are eating meat that still has blood in it. Yahweh told us not to do that, so they are sinning!”

Saul told all the soldiers, “You are breaking a law that Yahweh gave us when he made his agreement with us! Roll a large stone over here right now!”

34{Some soldiers rolled over a large stone, and then} Saul told his officers, “Go around and tell all of our soldiers that each of them must bring any ox or sheep that they wish to eat here where I am. Each one must slaughter it on this large stone {and drain the blood. Then} he can eat the meat. They must not sin against Yahweh by eating meat from an animal without draining its blood.” So that evening each of the soldiers led the animals they wanted to eat over to the great stone, and there they slaughtered them {and drained the blood before eating them}. **35**Then Saul built an altar that he dedicated to Yahweh {as a monument to commemorate this victory over the Philistines}. That was the first time he built something as an altar for Yahweh.

36Then Saul said to the Israelite soldiers, “We should chase the Philistine soldiers tonight. We can attack them all night long. We will not allow any of them to escape alive.”

The Israelite soldiers answered, “We will do whatever you think is the best thing for us to do.”

But Ahijah the priest said, “We should ask God what he wants us to.” **37**So {with Ahijah’s help,} Saul asked God, “Should we keep chasing the Philistine soldiers? Will you enable us Israelites to defeat them?” But God did not answer Saul when he asked this.

38Then Saul summoned all the leaders of his army. He said to them, “{Since God has not answered me,} we must carefully investigate how someone committed a sin today. **39**I swear by Yahweh, who has just rescued us Israelites, that we will certainly execute whoever has sinned. Even if it is my son Jonathan who has sinned, we will execute him.” {His men knew who was guilty, but} none of them said anything to Saul.

40Then Saul told all the Israelite soldiers, “{Since no one is saying who has sinned,} all of you stand over there, and my son Jonathan and I will stand over here {and we will cast a lot to find out}.” The soldiers told Saul, “Do whatever you think is best.”

41Then Saul prayed to Yahweh as the God whom the Israelites worshiped, “Please use this lot to show who has sinned.” Then the priest threw a lot, and it indicated that either Jonathan or Saul had sinned, not one of the other Israelite soldiers. **42**Then Saul told the priest, “Throw the lot again to indicate which of us has sinned.” So he did, and the lot indicated that Jonathan had sinned.

43Then Saul said to Jonathan, “Tell me how you sinned.”

Jonathan replied, “I ate some honey. It was only a little bit that was on the end of the spear that I was holding. If you feel that you must execute me for doing that, then go ahead.” **44**Saul replied, “Yes, I must certainly execute you, Jonathan! I ask God to kill me and do further bad things to me {if I do not execute you for committing this sin}!”

45But the Israelite soldiers said to Saul, “Jonathan has led all us Israelites to this great victory! So you must not execute him! That would be very wrong! Since Jonathan led us to this great victory by depending on God’s help, we swear by Yahweh that we will not allow you to harm him in any way.” By saying that, the Israelite soldiers persuaded Saul not to execute Jonathan.

46Then Saul ordered his soldiers to stop pursuing the Philistine army{, and he returned to his home in the city of Gibeah}. The Philistine soldiers returned to their land.

47After Saul became the king of Israel, he fought against its enemies on every side. He fought against Moab, the Ammonites, Edom, the kings of Zobah, and the Philistines. Wherever the Israelite army fought, they badly defeated their enemies. **48**Saul’s army fought bravely and defeated the very tall descendants of Amalek. His army rescued the Israelites from those who had been stealing their crops and animals.

49{When he became king,} Saul had three sons. Their names were Jonathan, Ishvi, and Malki-Shua. Saul also had two daughters. Their names were Merab and Michal. Merab was the older sister, and Michal was the younger sister. **50**The name of Saul’s wife was Ahinoam. She was the daughter of Ahimaaz. The name of the commander of Saul’s army was Abner. He was the son of Saul’s uncle Ner. **51**Saul’s father Kish and Abner’s father Ner were both sons of a man whose name was Abiel.

52For the whole time that Saul was alive, his army had to fight hard against the Philistine army. So whenever Saul saw a skillful soldier or a strong man, he forced him to join his army.

Chapter 15

1One day Samuel said to Saul, “It was Yahweh who sent me to appoint you as king of the Israelite people. So he expects you to obey this message that he has given me for you. **2**Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, has declared this: ‘I am going to punish the descendants of Amalek for attacking the Israelite people when the Israelites left Egypt. **3**So now go with your army and attack the Amalekites. Destroy all of the people and all of their

possessions. Do not spare any of the people. Kill them all, even if they are women or young children {who cannot fight against you}. Do not spare any of the animals, even if you could use them for carrying things or for plowing or for wool and milk.'"

4So Saul summoned the Israelite army and gathered them near the city of Telaim. There were 10,000 soldiers from the tribe of Judah and 200,000 soldiers from the other Israelite tribes. **5**Then Saul led his army to the main city in which the Amalekites lived. The army hid in a valley so that they could attack them suddenly. **6**But first Saul sent a message to the Kenite people group who lived in that area. He told them, "Move away right now from where the Amalekites live. You acted kindly toward our Israelite ancestors when they left Egypt, and so we do not want to kill you when we kill them." When the Kenites heard that, they immediately left the area where the Amalekites lived.

7Then Saul's army slaughtered the Amalekites. They killed everyone who lived in the area between the city of Havilah in the east to the region of Shur in the west. Shur was at the border between Israel and Egypt. **8**Saul's army killed all of those Amalekites as Yahweh had commanded. However, Saul told the soldiers not to kill Agag, the king of the Amalekites. **9**So Saul and his soldiers spared Agag. They also spared the best animals in the Amalekites' flocks and herds. They looked for special animals and ones that would taste delicious. They kept animals like that and only destroyed animals that they considered to be worthless.

10Then Yahweh said to Samuel, **11**"Saul has not done what I told him to do, and that shows that he is no longer obedient to me. As a result, I am sorry that I appointed Saul to be your king." But when Samuel heard this, he became very upset. He prayed hard to Yahweh all that night to try to get him to change his mind.

12Samuel got started early the next morning so that he could go and speak with Saul. Someone told Samuel, "Saul went to the city of Carmel. He did that to set up a monument in his own honor. Then he left there and went to Gilgal."

13When Samuel {arrived at Gilgal} and approached Saul, Saul said, "May Yahweh bless you! I have obeyed what Yahweh told me to do."

14But Samuel replied, "If that is true, then I should not be hearing sheep bleating or cattle mooing, but I am!"

15Saul replied, "The soldiers wanted to save the best sheep and cattle so they could offer them as sacrifices to Yahweh, your God. So they took these animals from the Amalekites and brought them here. But we completely destroyed all the other animals that the Amalekites had."

16Samuel said to Saul, "Stop talking! Allow me to tell you what Yahweh said to me last night."

Saul replied, "Tell me what he said." **17**Samuel said, "Previously you did not think that you were important. But Yahweh appointed you to be the king of Israel, so now you have become the leader of all the tribes of Israel. **18**And Yahweh sent you to do something for him. He told you, 'Go and get rid of all those Amalekites who sinned against me. Attack them and kill all of them.' **19**So you should have done what Yahweh told you to do! You should not have greedily taken for yourself what the Amalekites had {instead of destroying it}! You have done something that Yahweh considers to be evil."

20Saul replied to Samuel, "But I did do what Yahweh sent me to do! While it is true that I brought back the Amalekite king Agag, I and my soldiers killed all the other Amalekites! **21**And my men brought back only the best of the sheep and cattle and other things so that we could sacrifice them to Yahweh your God once we got here to Gilgal."

22But Samuel replied,

"It pleases Yahweh more when people do what he tells them to do

than when they completely burn animals as sacrifices to him and offer him other kinds of sacrifices.

It is much better to obey Yahweh than to offer sacrifices to him.

It is better to pay attention to what he says {and do it} than to burn the fat of rams as a sacrifice to him.

23To rebel against God is as sinful as doing sorcery,

and stubbornly resisting his correction is as sinful as worshiping idols.

You have disobeyed what Yahweh told you to do,

and as a result, he has decided that you will no longer be king."

24Then Saul said to Samuel, "I admit that I have sinned. I disobeyed what you told me Yahweh had commanded. I did that because I was afraid of what the soldiers would do to me if I did not give them what they wanted. **25**But please forgive me for sinning. Come back with me {and sacrifice some of these animals yourself} so that I can worship Yahweh."

26But Samuel replied, "No, I will not go back with you. You have chosen to disobey what Yahweh commanded you to do. So he has decided that you will no longer be the king of Israel. **27**Then Samuel turned to leave, Saul tried to stop him by grabbing the edge of his robe, and when he did that, he tore off a piece of it.

28Samuel said to him, "{You have taken this piece away from my robe, and in the same way,} Yahweh has now taken the kingship of Israel away from you. He is going to make another Israelite king instead of you. That other Israelite is a better man than you are. **29**You can be sure of this because when the glorious God whom the Israelite people worship says something, he means it and he will not change his mind about it. Humans sometimes change their minds, but God does not do that, because he is not a human."

30{Then Saul pleaded with Samuel further.} He said, "I admit that I have sinned. But please honor me in front of the Israelite leaders and people by coming with me so that I can worship Yahweh your God." **31**So Samuel finally agreed to do that. They went together back to where the people were, and Saul worshiped Yahweh there.

32Then Samuel said, "Bring the Amalekite king Agag to me." So they brought Agag to him. They had tied him up as a prisoner. Agag was thinking, "{Now that Samuel is here,} I am sure that the Israelites are not going to execute me painfully."

33But Samuel said to him,

"You have led armies that have killed the sons of many women with their swords.

So now your mother will no longer have a son as other women do."

Then Samuel chopped Agag into pieces with his sword. He did that at Gilgal, where the Israelites worshiped Yahweh.

34Then Samuel left there and returned to his home in Ramah, and Saul went to his home in Gibeah. **35**Samuel never saw Saul again for as long as he lived. He remained very sad that Saul had not been a good king. And Yahweh regretted that he had appointed Saul to be the king of Israel.

Chapter 16

1Finally, Yahweh said to Samuel, "You know that I have decided not to allow Saul to continue to be the king of Israel. So you should not keep feeling sad for him. I have recognized that one of the sons of the man whose name is Jesse who lives in the town of Bethlehem will make a good king. So I am sending you there {to pour oil on the head of that son to show this}. Now put some olive oil in a small container and go there."

2But Samuel said, "I am afraid to go. If Saul hears that I have appointed someone else to be king, he will kill me." Yahweh answered, "Take with you a female cow that has not yet given birth, and tell the people of Bethlehem that you have come to offer it as a sacrifice to me.

3Invite Jesse to come to the sacrifice. {When he comes,} I will show you what to do. I will tell you which of his sons I have chosen to be the king, and I want you to pour the olive oil on his head {to indicate that I have chosen him to be the king}."

4Samuel did what Yahweh told him to do. He went to Bethlehem. When the town leaders saw him coming, they were very afraid. One of them asked him, "Have you come here to speak peacefully with us?"

5Samuel replied, "Yes. I have come peacefully, to make a sacrifice to Yahweh. {Wash your bodies and your clothes in order to} devote yourselves to Yahweh in a special way, and then come with me to where we will offer this cow as a sacrifice." Then Samuel invited Jesse and his sons to come to the sacrifice as well, and he helped them prepare themselves to participate.

6When Jesse and his sons arrived at the place where Samuel was going to offer the sacrifice, Samuel looked at {Jesse's oldest son} Eliab, and thought, "This must be the man whom Yahweh wants me to anoint as the next king!"

7But Yahweh said to Samuel, "Yes, Eliab is handsome and very tall, but this should not impress you, since he is not the one I have chosen. I do not evaluate people as humans do. Humans evaluate people by their appearances, but I evaluate people by their character."

8Then Jesse told {his next oldest son} Abinadab to come and walk past Samuel. But {when he did that,} Samuel said, "Yahweh has not chosen this one, either." **9**Then Jesse told {his next oldest son} Shammah to come and walk past Samuel. But {when he did that,} Samuel said, "Yahweh has not chosen this one, either." **10**Similarly, Jesse told the other four of his sons who were present to come and walk past Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, "Yahweh has not chosen any of these sons of yours." **11**Then Samuel asked Jesse, "Are these all of your sons?" Jesse replied, "My youngest son is not here. That is because he is out in the pasture taking care of the sheep." Samuel told Jesse, "We will only sit down to eat once he has joined us. So send someone to bring him here."

12So Jesse sent someone to get David and bring him there. When David arrived, Samuel saw that he was a healthy, handsome young man with beautiful eyes. Then Yahweh said, "This is the one whom I have chosen. So anoint him to be king."

13So as David stood there with his {older} brothers around him, Samuel took the container of oil that he had brought and poured some of it on David's head {to indicate that Yahweh had chosen him to be the next king}. Immediately the Spirit of Yahweh began to influence David powerfully, and the Spirit continued to influence him from then on. {After they had shared a meal together with the meat from the heifer}, Samuel left and went back home to Ramah.

14But Yahweh's Spirit no longer influenced Saul. Instead, Yahweh sent a troubling spirit that made Saul afraid.

15His servants said to him, "It is evident that God has now sent a troubling spirit that is making you afraid. **16**So we suggest that you allow us, your servants here, to search for a man who plays the harp well. He can play the harp whenever that troubling spirit bothers you. Then you will calm down."

17Saul told his servants, "Fine, find a man for me who can play the harp well, and bring him to me."

18One of Saul's servants said to him, "I can think of someone. A man whose name is Jesse who lives in the city of Bethlehem has a certain son. I have observed that this son plays the harp very well. I have also observed that he is a brave man and a capable soldier. He is handsome, and he speaks well. Yahweh has been helping him {in all these ways}."

19So Saul sent some messengers to Jesse. He told them to say to Jesse, "Send your son David to me, the one who takes care of your sheep." **20**{When the messengers came and asked Jesse to send his son David to Saul, he agreed.} Jesse got some loaves of bread, a container of wine, and a young goat. He put them on a donkey that would carry them, and he gave them to David to take to Saul as a present.

21Then David went to Saul and started to work for him. Saul liked David very much, and he became the man who carried Saul's weapons when Saul went to fight in battles. **22**Then Saul sent messengers to say to Jesse, "I am very pleased with David. So please let him stay here and work for me." {And Jesse agreed.}

23After that, whenever the troubling spirit that God sent made Saul afraid, David would play the harp. Then the bad spirit would stop making Saul afraid, and he would calm down and feel better.

Chapter 17

1The Philistines brought their soldiers to fight against the Israelite army. They assembled near the town of Sokoh within the territory of the tribe of Judah. They set up their tents in the area that people called Ephes Dammim, which is between Sokoh and the town of Azekah. **2**Saul gathered the Israelite solders, and they set up their tents near the Valley of Elah. Then they formed battle lines in order to be ready to fight the Philistines. **3**The Philistine and Israelite armies formed their battle lines on two hills on opposite sides of the valley.

4Then a great warrior, three meters tall, came out from the Philistine camp. His name was Goliath, and he came from the city of Gath. **5**He wore a helmet made of bronze to protect his head, and he wore body armor that had small overlapping metal plates to protect his body. The metal armor weighed over 50 kilograms. **6**He wore bronze armor on his legs {to protect them}. He had slung a small bronze spear across his back. **7**He also had a spear that was so thick and long it was like the beam that weavers use. Its iron head weighed about seven kilograms. A soldier carrying Goliath's huge shield walked in front of him.

8Goliath stood there and shouted to the Israelite army, "There is no need for our entire armies to fight each other. You can see that I am a Philistine soldier who is ready to fight alone on behalf of my people group. Someone ought to be able to represent all of you servants of Saul. Choose one man who can fight on behalf of all of you and send him down into this valley where I am! **9**If he can fight with me and kill me, then my fellow Philistines will all become your slaves. But if I can fight with him and kill him, then all of you Israelites will become our slaves instead." **10**Then Goliath mocked the Israelites. He said, "I now claim publicly, to your shame, that none of you Israelite soldiers is brave enough to fight me! {If that is not true,} send a man down here who will fight with me!" **11**When Saul and all the Israelite soldiers heard Goliath say this, they lost their courage and became terrified.

12Now there was a young man whose name was David. His father was a man whose name was Jesse who belonged to the clan of Ephrath. He lived in the town of Bethlehem within the territory of the tribe of Judah. Jesse had eight sons. When Saul was king, Jesse had already lived for many years, so he was older than most other men. **13**Jesse's three oldest sons had gone to fight the Philistines with Saul as their commander. The name of Jesse's oldest son was Eliab. His two younger brothers were Abinadab and Shammah. **14**David was Jesse's youngest son. While his three oldest brothers remained in Saul's camp, **15**David went back and forth from the camp to his home in Bethlehem so that he could take care of his father's sheep.

16Twice each day, in the morning and in the evening, Goliath came out from the Philistine camp and stood in the valley between the two armies. He challenged the Israelites to choose one man to fight with him. He did that for 40 days.

17One day, Jesse said to his son David, "Here is a large sack of roasted grain and ten loaves of bread. Take them quickly to your older brothers at the army camp. **18**Also, take these ten large chunks of cheese as a gift to the commander of their group of one thousand soldiers. And see if your older brothers are doing well. If they are safe, bring back something to show they are all right.

19You will be able to find your brothers near the Valley of Elah. They are camping there with Saul and the other Israelite soldiers, ready to fight the Philistines." **20**So David arranged for another shepherd to take care of the sheep. Early the next morning he took the food that Jesse had told him to bring and went to the Israelite camp. He arrived at the edge of the camp just as the Israelite soldiers were going out into their battle lines. As they went,

they were shouting a war cry. **21**The Philistine army and the Israelite army stood in their battle lines {on the hillsides above the valley}, facing each other, ready for battle. **22**David gave the containers of food he had brought to the man who was in charge of the supplies for the army. Then he ran to the battle lines and greeted his older brothers. He asked them if they were doing well. **23**While David was speaking with them, something happened that immediately got his attention. Someone came into the valley between the battle lines. This was the man whom people called Goliath the Philistine Champion. He was from the city of Gath. He came forward from the Philistine battle lines and once again challenged any Israelite soldier to fight him in single combat. David heard what Goliath said. **24**When all the Israelite soldiers saw Goliath, they were terrified and backed away from him. **25**The soldiers were saying to each other, “See how this man defiantly approaches us! And hear how he mocks us Israelite soldiers! The king has said that he will give a huge reward to whoever kills this man. He also says that he will allow that man to marry his daughter, and that he will no longer require that man’s family to pay taxes or do unpaid work for the Israelite kingdom.”

26David talked with some of the men who were standing near him. He said, “This Philistine is a mere pagan. He should not be mocking soldiers who worship the only true God. Please confirm for me what the king will give to the soldier who kills this Philistine and stops him from shaming us Israelites.”

27Those men told him the same thing that the other men had said about what the king would do for anyone who killed Goliath.

28But when David’s oldest brother Eliab heard David talking to the men, he became very angry with him. He said to David, “You should not have come here! You are supposed to be watching our father’s small flock of sheep, but I imagine you left them alone in a desolate pastureland. I know you think you have a right to be here, but you do not. You do not have good motives. You came because you want to watch the battle!”

29David replied, “I have done nothing wrong! I was merely asking a question!” **30**Then David walked over to another man and asked him the same question, and the man gave him the same answer. Each time he asked different soldiers, they all gave him the same answer. **31**Eventually some of King Saul’s officers heard about what David was asking, and they told Saul. Then Saul sent someone to bring David to him.

32David told King Saul, “No one should despair because of him. I will go and fight with that Philistine man!”

33Saul said to David, “You are only a young man, while he has been a very powerful soldier ever since he was a young man. He is the Philistine champion. So you are not able to go and fight with him!”

34David replied, “I have been taking care of my father’s sheep for many years. During that time, whenever a lion or a bear came and carried a lamb away from the others, **35**I went after it and hit it and rescued the lamb from the animal’s mouth. If it turned to attack me, I grabbed the animal by its jaw and hit it and killed it. **36**So I have killed both lions and bears. And since he has mocked soldiers who worship the only true God, I will kill this pagan Philistine too!” **37**David continued, “Yahweh has enabled me to kill both lions and bears, and he will also enable me to kill this Philistine!” Then Saul said to David, “All right, go and fight him, and I hope that Yahweh will help you!”

38Then Saul let David wear the special clothes that he wore under his armor in battles, and he also gave him a bronze helmet to wear and some body armor that had small overlapping metal plates. **39**David put these things on. Saul also gave David his sword, and David strapped that on over them. Since David had not worn armor before, he walked around to find out what it was like to walk wearing armor. Then David told Saul, “I am not used to wearing these things, so I cannot fight while wearing them!” So he took them off.

40Then he picked up his shepherd’s staff, and he went to a a stream bed and chose five smooth stones. He put those stones in the leather bag he always wore around his shoulder as a shepherd. Then he took his sling in his hand, and he started walking toward Goliath.

41Goliath walked steadily toward David, with the soldier who was carrying his shield walking in front of him. **42**{When he got near David,} Goliath looked at David closely. He believed he could easily defeat David because he was only a young man. David still had a handsome, boyish appearance. **43**Goliath said to David, “You might be able

to chase away a dog with a stick like the one you are carrying, but I am not a dog!" Then he called out to his gods and asked them to harm David. **44**He said to David, "Come here, and I will kill you and give your dead body to the birds and wild animals to eat!"

45David replied, "You are coming to attack me with a sword and a spear and a curved sword. But I am coming to you with the authority of Yahweh, commander of the angel armies. You have mocked the Israelite soldiers who worship him, and that is like mocking Yahweh himself. **46**Today Yahweh will enable me to defeat you. I will kill you and cut off your head. And today we Israelites will kill many Philistine soldiers and give their bodies to the birds and wild animals to eat. People throughout the world will hear about it, and they will know that we Israelite people worship an all-powerful God. **47**And all of the soldiers who have gathered here will recognize that Yahweh does not need to use weapons such as swords or spears in order to rescue people. It is actually Yahweh who will be fighting this battle against you, and he will enable us to defeat all of you Philistines."

48Then Goliath started to come closer in order to attack David. David ran quickly toward him, in the direction of the Philistine battle line. **49**David reached into his shoulder bag and took out a stone. He put in his sling and hurled it at Goliath. The stone hit Goliath in the forehead and broke into the bone at the front his skull. Goliath collapsed facedown onto the ground.

50-51 Then David ran and stood over Goliath. He pulled Goliath's sword from its sheath and killed him with it, and then he cut off his head. In that way David defeated that great Philistine soldier. He was able to attack him and kill him even though he did not have a sword. He used only a sling and a stone!

When the other Philistines saw that their great soldier was dead, they ran away. **52**The Israelite soldiers rushed out of their battle line and ran after them, shouting. They chased them all the way back down the Valley of Elah and all the way to the city of Ekron. The Philistines fled for safety inside the city walls and shut the gates behind them. The Israelites killed Philistine soldiers as they went, so that dead Philistines were lying on the road all the way from the city of Shaaraim to the cities of Gath and Ekron. **53**When the Israelites came back after chasing the Philistines, they took everything valuable from the Philistine camp. **54**David later took Goliath's head to Jerusalem, but he kept Goliath's weapons and armor at home in his own tent.

55As Saul watched David going toward Goliath, he said to Abner, the commander of his army, "Abner, who is the father of that young man?" Abner replied, "I swear by your life, O king, that I do not know."

56Then Saul told him, "I want you personally to find out who his father is."

57So later, when David returned from killing Goliath, Abner brought him to Saul. David was carrying Goliath's head.

58Saul asked him, "Young man, who is your father?" David replied, "Sir, my father is the man whose name is Jesse who lives in the town of Bethlehem. He is your loyal subject."

Chapter 18

1After David finished speaking with Saul{, he met Saul's son Jonathan.} Jonathan immediately felt a strong friendship for David. He loved him as much as he loved himself. **2**Saul did not allow David to return home after he killed Goliath. Instead, Saul kept David with him to serve him. **3**Because he loved David as much as he loved himself, Jonathan made a solemn agreement with David that they would always be friends. **4**Jonathan took off the outer robe he was wearing and gave it to David. He also gave David the special clothes he wore under his armor, his sword, his bow and arrows, and his belt.

5David then fought battles as Saul directed him. Whatever Saul told him to do, David did it very successfully. As a result, Saul appointed David as a commander in the army. The people of Israel, and especially the ones who served Saul directly, admired David greatly.

6One time, David and the troops he was commanding defeated a Philistine army and killed many of its soldiers.
Then he returned to Israel with the rest of the Israelite army. Women came out from many Israelite cities and
towns to greet King Saul {and all the soldiers}. They were singing and dancing very happily, and they were playing
tambourines and lyres. **7**To celebrate, the women sang this song:

“Saul has killed thousands of enemy soldiers,

And David has killed tens of thousands of them!”

8When Saul heard the women singing that, he did not like it at all. He became very angry. He said to himself, “They
are saying that David has killed tens of thousands of enemy soldiers. But they are only saying that I have killed
thousands of them. The only greater honor they could give him would be to make him the king instead of me!”
9From that time on, Saul watched David very closely {because he was suspicious that David would try to become
king}.

10The next day, a troubling spirit that God sent suddenly began to affect Saul. He began to act like a crazy person
inside his house. David was playing the lyre for him, as he often did. Saul was holding his royal spear. **11**Saul
thought, “I can throw my spear so hard at David that it will go through him into the wall behind him and pin him
there!” Saul threw his spear at David twice, but David jumped aside both times.

12Saul realized that Yahweh was no longer helping him. He realized that Yahweh was now helping David. This made
Saul afraid of David. **13**So Saul tried to make sure that David would not be near him. He made David the
commander of a thousand of his soldiers. Then David had to lead those soldiers out on military campaigns. **14**But
Yahweh helped David, so David won all of the battles that he fought. **15**When Saul heard how successful David and
his soldiers were, he became very afraid even to be in the same place as David. **16**But because David was leading
their soldiers very successfully in battles, all the people of Israel and of Judah loved David.

17One day Saul said to David, “I want to talk to you about my older daughter Merab. I will allow you to marry her if
you serve me bravely by fighting battles for Yahweh {against the Philistines}.” Saul said that because he thought, “I
will not try to kill David myself. I will have the Philistines kill him.”

18But David said to Saul, “I do not have the standing to become your son-in-law. I am not a very important person,
and I come from a family that does not belong to an important Israelite clan.” **19**So at the time when Saul would
have allowed David to marry his daughter Merab, instead he allowed a different man to marry her. This man was
from the town of Meholah and his name was Adriel.

20However, Saul’s other daughter, Michal, fell in love with David. When someone told Saul about that, he was
pleased. **21**Saul thought, “I will promise to give Michal to him as his wife, but I will do that in order to trap him. {I
will make him fight dangerously against the Philistines in order to marry her,} and this will enable the Philistines to
kill him.” So Saul told David once again that he could become his son-in-law right away.

22Saul told his servants, “Talk to David privately and tell him, ‘Listen, the king is pleased with you. All of us who
serve him love you. So we think that you should marry Michal and become the king’s son-in-law.’”

23So they said those things to David. But David replied, “It would be a great honor for anyone to become the king’s
son-in-law. But {I do not think that I should do that, because} I am only a poor and insignificant man.”

24Saul’s servants came back and told him what David had said. **25**Saul replied, “Go and tell David, ‘The king does not
want you to pay him a large amount of money in order to marry Michal. All he wants you to do is kill a hundred
Philistine soldiers and bring back their foreskins. In that way, he will get revenge on his enemies.’” But what Saul
really wanted was for the Philistines to kill David while he was trying to kill them.

26When the servants told that to David, he was very pleased that he could become the king’s son-in-law by doing
that. Saul gave David a time limit. Within that time, **27**David and his men went into battle and killed two hundred
Philistine soldiers. He brought back their foreskins. Saul’s officials counted them all while Saul was watching. This

proved that David had done what Saul had required for him to become his son-in-law. So Saul allowed David to marry his daughter Michal.

28But when Saul realized that Yahweh was helping David and that his own daughter Michal truly loved David, **29**he became even more afraid of David. After this, for as long as he lived, Saul was David's enemy.

30The Philistine commanders kept leading their armies to fight against the Israelites, but every time they fought, David and his soldiers were more successful than any of Saul's other army commanders. As a result, David earned an excellent reputation.

Chapter 19

1Then Saul urged all his officers and his son Jonathan to kill David. But Jonathan liked David very much. **2**So he warned David, "My father Saul is looking for a way to kill you. So please be very careful. Tomorrow morning, find a place to hide {in the field} and do not come out {unless I tell you it is safe}. **3**I will ask my father to go out with me into the field where you are hiding. While we are there, I will talk to him about you. I will find out what he intends to do to you. Then I will tell you everything I learn." {So David did what Jonathan told him to do.}

4The next morning, Jonathan spoke with his father Saul {in the field}. He said many good things about David. He told his father, "Please do not do anything to harm David, who serves you faithfully. That would be a sin. David has never done anything to harm you. Everything he has done has helped you very much. **5**He risked his life when he fought against Goliath, the great soldier of the Philistine army. By enabling David to kill him, Yahweh won a great victory for all the people of Israel. You were very happy when you saw that. There is no reason for you to kill David. You should not do that. It would be sinning by killing an innocent man."

6What Jonathan said persuaded Saul. Saul swore by Yahweh that he would not kill David.

7{Then Saul left, and} Jonathan called to David {to come out of his hiding place}. Jonathan told him that Saul had sworn he would not kill him. Then Jonathan brought David back to Saul, and David served Saul personally as he had done before.

8But then the Philistines attacked the Israelites again. David led his soldiers to fight against the Philistine army. David's soldiers killed many of the Philistine soldiers, and as a result, the rest of the Philistine army ran away.

9{This made Saul very jealous again. As a result,} one day when Saul was sitting in his house, the troubling spirit that Yahweh had sent began to distress him again. Saul was holding his royal spear, and David was playing the harp for him. **10**Saul hurled his spear hard enough at David that it would have gone through him into the wall behind him and pinned him there. But David jumped aside so that the spear did not hit him. It stuck in the wall instead. David escaped by running out into the darkness.

11Then Saul sent some soldiers to David's house. He told them to see whether David was in the house and to kill him when he left the house the following morning. But David's wife Michal {knew about this and} warned him. She told him, "In order to save your life, you must run away tonight. If you do not do that, some soldiers will kill you tomorrow!" **12**Then she lowered David out a window {since the soldiers were watching the door}, and he escaped by running away from the house. **13**Then Michal took a large statue that was in the house and put it in the bed. She covered it with David's cloak {as if he were sleeping under his cloak as a blanket}, and she put some goat's hair around the head of the statue {to make it look like a human head}.

14{The soldiers did not see David leaving the house in the morning, so they reported that to Saul.} Saul then sent soldiers to {enter the house and} bring David back to him. But {when they came to the door,} Michal told them that David was {so} sick {that he could not get out of bed}.

15{When the soldiers reported that,} Saul told them to enter David's house and see whether he was really sick. He told them, "{If you have to,} pick up the whole bed he is lying on and use that to carry him back here to me. That

way I can kill him!” **16**But when those soldiers entered David’s house, they found that there was only a statue in his bed, with goat’s hair around its head.

17{When they reported that to Saul, he summoned Michal to come to him.} Saul said to her, “Why did you trick me like that? You allowed my enemy to escape!”

Michal replied to Saul, “David told me that if I did not let him escape, he would kill me! {So I had to let him escape.}”

18After David had escaped from Saul, he went to Samuel, who was at his home in Ramah. He told Samuel everything that Saul had done to try to kill him. Then David and Samuel went to Naioth, which was nearby, and they stayed there. **19**Someone told Saul that David was in Naioth near the city of Ramah. **20**So Saul sent some soldiers to capture David. {When those soldiers arrived in Ramah,} they met some prophets who were speaking and singing as God inspired them. Samuel was there as their leader. The Spirit of God influenced the soldiers whom Saul had sent, and they began to speak and sing themselves {instead of trying to capture David}. **21**When Saul heard about that, he sent another group of soldiers to capture David. {But when those soldiers met those prophets, the Spirit of God influenced them too,} and they also sang and spoke {instead of trying to capture David}. {When Saul heard about that,} he sent one more group of soldiers to capture David. But the same thing happened to them. **22**Finally Saul himself went to Ramah. He went to the big well at the place that people call Seku, and he asked {the people who had gathered there to draw water}, “Where are Samuel and David?”

The people replied, “You will find them at Naioth, near Ramah.” **23**So Saul started walking toward Ramah to go to Naioth. While he was still on his way there, the Spirit of God influenced him as well, and he spoke and sang all the way to Naioth near Ramah. **24**There he also took off his outer clothes, and he spoke and sang in front of Samuel. He lay on the ground uncovered all day and all night. That is the reason why{, when people see someone doing something unexpected,} they say, “Is Saul also a prophet?”

Chapter 20

1David ran away from Naioth. He went to meet with Jonathan and told him, “I have done nothing wrong. I have not harmed your father. Nevertheless, he is trying to kill me!”

2Jonathan replied, “My father is not going to kill you! I would not let that happen. Besides, he always tells me before he does anything of any kind. So he would not fail to tell me if he were planning to kill you. What you are saying cannot be true.”

3Then David solemnly declared this to Jonathan: “Your father knows very well that you and I are very good friends, so he says to himself, ‘I will not tell Jonathan what I am going to do. If I tell Jonathan, he will be upset, and then he will tell David.’ But I swear by Yahweh and I swear by your own life that your father is just about to kill me.”

4Jonathan said to David, “I will do for you whatever you tell me to do.”

5David replied, “Here is what you can do for me. Tomorrow the king will host a feast to celebrate the start of a new month. I always sit with the king at such festivals. But this time, allow me not to attend. Instead, I will hide in the field, and I will stay there until the evening of the day after tomorrow. **6**If your father asks why I am not there at the festival, this is what you should tell him: ‘All of David’s relatives gather once a year to sacrifice an animal {and eat a meal from the meat at which they praise and thank Yahweh}. He asked permission from me to make a brief visit to Bethlehem so that he could eat that meal with his family.’ **7**If your father says, ‘Very well’, then I know I will be safe. But if he becomes extremely angry, you can be sure that he definitely intends to kill me. **8**If that is true, then you must protect me. You indicated you would do that when you promised, with Yahweh as your witness, that you and I would always be good friends. But if I deserve to die for something very wrong that I have done, then you should kill me yourself. You do not need to make your father kill me.”

9Jonathan replied, “I would never let my father kill you! If I ever find out that my father definitely intends to kill you, I will certainly tell you that.”

10David asked him, “How will I find out if your father answers you harshly?” **11**Jonathan replied, “{We need to go somewhere where we can speak more privately.} Please come with me out to the field.” So they went together out into the field.

12There Jonathan said to David, “I swear by Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, that by this time tomorrow or the next day, I will find out from my father whether he intends to kill you. If he does not intend to kill you, I will certainly send a message to you to inform you of that. **13**But if he is planning to kill you, I hope that Yahweh will punish me very severely if I do not tell you in advance and help you flee so that you get away safely. Yahweh helped my father when he became king, and I hope that Yahweh will help you in the same way. **14**While Yahweh was listening, we swore an oath that we would always be friends. So I know you will not kill me when you become king. But suppose I have already died when you become king. Then our oath would not apply to me personally. **15**Instead, please never stop acting kindly toward my family, even after Yahweh has killed all your enemies everywhere on earth.”

16Then Jonathan and David made a solemn agreement that applied to David’s descendants as well. They agreed that if David or his descendants ever killed Jonathan’s descendants, then they wanted Yahweh to punish David and his descendants by killing them. **17**Then Jonathan also had David swear by the love he had for Jonathan {that he would not harm his descendants. Jonathan knew that David would keep that promise} because David loved Jonathan as much as he loved himself.

18Then Jonathan told him, “Tomorrow we will celebrate the festival of the new moon. Since you will not be sitting at your place when we eat, my father will miss you. **19**The day after tomorrow, hurry down from your hiding place high up in the mountains. Come back here and hide in the same place where you hid when I first warned you that my father was trying to kill you. Wait by the big rock that people call Ezel. **20**I will come out and pretend that I am using the rock as a target to practice how to shoot arrows. I will shoot three arrows, and I will make sure that they land beside the rock. **21**Then I will tell a boy to go and get the arrows. You may hear me call out to him, ‘You have gone too far, the arrows are behind you, turn around and pick them up!’ I swear by Yahweh that if you hear me say that, then it is safe for you to return. You are in no danger. **22**But you might also hear me call out to the boy, ‘The arrows are still past you, keep going!’ If you hear me say that, you will know that you must leave immediately. Yahweh wants you to go away {so that you will be safe}. **23**Regarding the promise we made never to harm the descendants of the other, Yahweh will always make sure that we keep it.”

24So David went and hid in the field. When the festival of the new moon started, King Saul came to the table for the feast. **25**He sat where he usually sat, in the place of honor {at the end of the table} close to the wall. Jonathan gave up his seat next to Saul so that Abner, the army commander, could sit next to him. But David was absent. He was not sitting in his usual seat. **26**At the time Saul did not say anything {about David being absent}, because he was thinking, “Something must have happened that caused David to become ritually unclean so that he cannot attend this religious festival today.” **27**But the next day, when David was not sitting at the place where he usually sat, Saul asked Jonathan, “Why has that son of Jesse not been here to eat with us either yesterday or today?”

28Jonathan replied, “David urgently requested permission from me to go to Bethlehem. **29**He told me, ‘Our family is going to offer a sacrifice in Bethlehem, and my oldest brother has insisted that I be there. So please let me go. I hope that you think well enough of me to permit that, since I would like to go and visit with my older brothers.’ {I allowed David to go, and} that is the reason why he is not here eating with you.”

30Saul became furious with Jonathan. He said to him, “Your mother must have been unfaithful to me{, because no real son of mine would have done that}! It is no secret to me that you have promised always to be friends with that son of Jesse. But by being his friend, you are shaming yourself by showing that your mother must have had sexual relations with some other man who is your actual father. **31**I can assure you that as long as Jesse’s son is living, you will never become king. No, you will never rule this kingdom! So now send someone to get David and bring him to me, because I must execute him!”

32Jonathan insisted to his father, “David has done nothing wrong! So you should not execute him!” **33**Then Saul {became so angry that he} threw his spear at Jonathan to try to kill him. {But the spear did not hit him.} So Jonathan knew that his father really did want to kill David.

34This made Jonathan very angry, and he left the room. On that second day of the festival, he refused to eat anything. His father had said unfairly that David was not loyal to him, and that made Jonathan offended for David’s sake.

35The next morning Jonathan went out to the field {to give a message to David} as he had agreed that he would do. He took a young boy with him. **36**Jonathan told the boy, “Run out into the field so that you can find the arrows that I shoot.” The boy started running, and Jonathan shot an arrow over the boy {so that it would land on the ground far ahead of him}. **37**The boy ran to the place where the arrow hit the ground, but Jonathan shouted out to him, “The arrow is farther away!” **38**{After he had done this three times,} he shouted to the boy, “Now come back here right away! Do not stay out there in the field!” The boy picked up the arrows Jonathan had shot and brought them back to him. **39**The boy did not realize that Jonathan had given a signal to David. Only Jonathan and David knew about that. **40**Then Jonathan gave his bow and arrows to the boy and told him, “Take these back to where I keep my weapons in the city.”

41When the boy left, David came out from behind the south side of the large rock where he had been hiding. He went to Jonathan and bowed respectfully in front of him three times, with his face touching the ground. Then David and Jonathan kissed each other {on the cheek}, and they cried together until David became exhausted from crying.

42Jonathan said to David, “I am letting you go safely, because we made a promise to each other with Yahweh as our witness. We asked Yahweh to make sure that we would always help each other and that our descendants would never hurt each other.” Then David finally left, and Jonathan went back into the city of Gibeah.

Chapter 21

1David fled from there and went to the city of Nob. Ahimelech, the high priest, was there with the sacred chest. Ahimelech shook with fear when he saw David coming. He asked David, “Why have you not brought any soldiers with you?”

2David {did not tell him the truth. He} told Ahimelech, “I have come on a special mission from the king. I am alone because he told me that no one should find out about what he sent me to do. But I will have soldiers with me. I have told them to meet me at a specific place, but I must not say where that is. **3**Please tell me, do you have any food here that you could give me? Could you give me five loaves of bread, or whatever other food might be here?”

4Ahimelech told David, “There is no ordinary bread here, but I have some of the sacred bread that we put on the table in the sacred tent. I will give your men that bread to eat if they have not recently become ceremonially unclean by having sexual relations with women.”

5David replied, “As I have always done in the past when I have led my soldiers on a mission, I have not allowed them to become ceremonially unclean by having sexual relations before they left. They have remained ceremonially clean even on ordinary missions. So you can be sure that they have remained ceremonially clean for this special mission.” **6**Now the only bread that the priest had available was some bread that the priests had put on the table in Yahweh’s presence in the sacred tent. They had later removed that bread to replace it with fresh bread. So the priest gave David several loaves of it.

7On that day a man who worked for Saul was at the sacred tent. His name was Doeg. He came from the Edomite people group. King Saul had made him the supervisor of all of his shepherds. Doeg needed to stay at the sacred tent until he had fulfilled a religious duty. {He saw what Ahimelech did to help David.}

8David asked Ahimelech, “Do you have a spear or a sword here that you could give me? The king commanded me to leave right away on this mission, so I did not even have time to get any weapons.”

9Ahimelech replied, “The only sword I have here is the sword that belonged to Goliath, that great Philistine soldier. You killed him in the Valley of Elah. You will find that sword behind the sacred apron in the sacred tent. It has a cloth around it. If you want it, you may take it.”

David replied, “There is certainly no other sword that is as good as that one! Please give it to me.” **10**{So Ahimelech gave it to him, and} David left that same day so that Saul would not capture him. He ran away to the Philistine city of Gath. He offered to work for Achish, the king of that city. **11**But the officers of King Achish {did not approve of David’s coming. They} said to King Achish, “This man David is the king of Israel! The women in Israel sing about him as they dance,

“Saul has killed thousands of enemy soldiers,

And David has killed tens of thousands of them!”

12David was very concerned about what those officers were saying. It made him very afraid of what King Achish might do to him. **13**So whenever he was with those officers or the king, he acted differently. For as long as he was in Gath, where they could harm him, he pretended that he was insane. {When he was waiting in the court outside the palace,} he would scratch all over the gate {that led into the palace}. He also drooled so much that saliva ran down onto his beard.

14Then King Achish said to his men, “Look at this man! He is acting crazy! You should not have brought him to me! **15**I already have enough crazy people around me! You do not need to bring me any more! I do not want this man to serve me in my palace.”

Chapter 22

1So David fled from Gath and went to hide in a cave on a hill near the town of Adullam. When his older brothers and his other relatives heard about this, they came and stayed with him there. **2**Then other men joined him. Some were in trouble. Others had debts they could not pay. Still others came because they did not like what was happening in Israel with Saul as king. David became their commander. Eventually he had an army of 400 men.

3Later David and his men left there and went to the city of Mizpah in the land of Moab. There David asked the king of Moab, “Please allow my father and mother to live here with you until I know what God is going to do for me.” **4**{The king agreed,} so David brought his parents to Moab, where the king would protect them. David and his men found a safe place to hide in Moab. His parents stayed with the king for as long as he was there.

5A prophet whose name was Gad {was with him. One day he} told David, “Leave your hideout here and return to Judah.” So David and his men went to the forest of Hereth in Judah.

6Saul learned that people knew that David and his men had returned to Judah. One day Saul was sitting underneath the tamarisk tree on a hill in the city of Gibeah. He was holding his royal spear, and his officials were standing around him. **7**He shouted to them as they stood around him, “You men of the tribe of Benjamin, listen to me! Do not think that the son of Jesse will give all of you fields and vineyards if he becomes your king! Do not think that he will appoint all of you as generals and captains in his army! **8**{You seem to think that, and} that is why you have all conspired against me. Not one of you informed me that my own son had promised always to be friends with that son of Jesse! Not one of you felt sorry for me or told me that my son had encouraged my own servant to revolt against me! At this very moment he is hiding somewhere, hoping to surprise me and kill me!”

9Doeg, a man from the Edomite people group, was standing there with Saul’s officers. He told Saul, “When I was at Nob, I saw that son of Jesse talking to Ahimelech the priest. **10**Ahimelech asked Yahweh to show David what he should do. Ahimelech also gave David some food, and he gave him the sword that had belonged to Goliath, that great Philistine soldier.”

11Then Saul sent messengers to summon the high priest Ahimelech son of Ahitub. The messengers also
summoned all of Ahimelech's relatives who were priests at Nob. So they all came and stood in front of the king.
12Saul said to Ahimelech, "You son of Ahitub, listen to me!"

Ahimelech answered, "Yes, sir?" **13**Saul said, "You are conspiring against me with that son of Jesse! You gave him
some bread and a sword, and you asked God to tell him what he should do. You helped him to revolt against me,
and at this very moment he is hiding somewhere, hoping to surprise me and kill me!"

14Ahimelech replied, "{I do not understand why you are saying that, because} no one else who serves you is more
loyal to you than David! He is your son-in-law and the captain of your bodyguards. The people in your household
respect him very much. **15**I have asked God on previous occasions to tell David what he wanted him to do. I would
never help anyone revolt against you! So please do not accuse me or any of my relatives of being disloyal to you. I
do not know anything about what you are talking about."

16Saul shouted back, "Ahimelech, I am going to execute you and all your relatives right now!"

17Then Saul commanded his bodyguards, who were standing around him, "These priests of Yahweh are conspiring
with David against me! They knew that David was trying to run away from me, but they did not tell me! So I want
you to kill them right away!"

But Saul's bodyguards refused to kill Yahweh's priests.

18Then Saul said to Doeg, "You kill them!" So Doeg, that man from the Edomite people group, did what Saul
commanded and attacked the priests. He killed 85 men that day who were wearing sacred aprons because they
were priests. **19**Then Doeg went to kill all the other people of Nob, the city where the priests lived. He killed all the
men, women, children, babies, cattle, donkeys, and sheep who were there.

20However, one of Ahimelech's sons escaped. His name was Abiathar. He ran away and joined David and the men
who were with him. **21**He told David that Saul had commanded Doeg to kill Yahweh's priests. **22**Then David said to
him, "That man from the Edomite people group, Doeg, was there at Nob on the day when I was there. I knew that
he would surely tell Saul that your father helped me. So it is my fault that your father and all of his family are dead.
23The man who wants to kill you also wants to kill me, so stay with me and do not be afraid. You you will be safe if
you stay with me."

Chapter 23

1One day messengers came and told David, "We have important news! The Philistine army is attacking the town of
Keilah! They are stealing the grain from where the people are threshing it!" **2**So David asked Yahweh, "Should I lead
my men to fight against these Philistine soldiers?"

Yahweh told David, "Yes, go and attack them and rescue the people of Keilah." **3**But David's men said to him,
"Listen, we are afraid here in Judah that Saul might attack us. We will be even more afraid if we go to Keilah where
we know the Philistine army is!"

4So David asked Yahweh again if they should go to Keilah. Yahweh answered, "I will enable you to defeat the
Philistines. So yes, go to Keilah {and rescue the people there}." **5**So David and his men went to Keilah and fought
against the Philistines. They killed many of their soldiers and captured many of their cattle. In that way David and
his men rescued the people of Keilah.

6David was at Keilah when Abiathar son of Ahimelech ran away to join him. Abiathar brought a sacred apron with
him {that he could use to ask what God someone should do}.

7Someone told Saul that David was at Keilah. Saul said, “God is enabling me to capture him! David has trapped himself in that city, because a wall surrounds it, and I can get its people to lock the gates to keep David from leaving.”

8So Saul gathered his whole army so that they could go to Keilah and surround it. Saul wanted to force the people of the city to surrender David and his men to him.

9But David found out that Saul was preparing to capture him with his army. So he told Abiathar the priest, “Bring the sacred apron here {so we can use it to consult Yahweh}.” **10**{So when Abiathar brought it,} David prayed, “Yahweh, God of us Israelites, I have heard reliably that Saul is planning to come here to Keilah with his army. He will destroy the city if he has to in order to capture me. **11**Will Saul actually come here to Keilah, as people have reported to me? Will the leaders of Keilah let Saul capture me? Yahweh,

God of us Israelites, please tell me!” {By means of the stones in the sacred apron,} Yahweh replied, “Yes, Saul will come here.” **12**Then David asked, “{If we stay here,} will the leaders of Keilah let Saul’s army capture me and my men?”

Yahweh replied, “Yes, they will.” **13**So David and his men left Keilah. By this time, he had 600 men with him. They continued to move around from one place to another, wherever they thought that Saul would not find them. And when Saul found out that David had gotten away from Keilah, he did not go there.

14After this, David and his men stayed in hiding places in the desert and in the hills of the desolate area that people call Ziph. Saul kept trying to find out where David was, but God enabled David to hide where Saul could not find him.

15At one point, David and his men were hiding in the forest of Horesh in the desolate area of Ziph. David knew that Saul was trying to find out where he was so that he could kill him. **16**But Saul’s son Jonathan went to David in the forest. He helped him feel brave again by reassuring him that he could trust God to protect him. **17**Jonathan told him, “My father is not going to be able to harm you, so do not be afraid. Some day you will be the king of Israel, and I will be your most important official. Even my father Saul knows that.” **18**Then, with Yahweh as their witness, David and Jonathan repeated their solemn promise always to be loyal to each other. Then Jonathan went home, and David stayed in the forest.

19Then people who lived in the region of Ziph went to Gibeah to speak with Saul. They told him, “David and his men are hiding in our region! They are hiding in places in the forest on the hill of Hakilah, south of the desolate area that people call Jeshimon. **20**So you may go there any time you wish, O king, and it will be our duty to enable you to capture him.”

21Saul replied, “Because you have wanted to help me, I hope that Yahweh will make good things happen for you. **22**But people tell me that David is very clever{, so it will be difficult to capture him}. So I want you to go back and be sure that he is where you say. Have people look and find out exactly where he is staying. {Do not just rely on what someone else says.} Make sure that one of you has actually seen him there. **23**Find out about all the places where he and his men hide. Then return and tell me what you have discovered. I will bring my army and go back with you. If David is anywhere in your area, we will find him, even if we have to look in every part of the territory of Judah!”

24So those people went back to Ziph to get things ready for Saul to come there. At that time, David and his men were in a desolate area of the plain in the southern part of Jeshimon. People call that area Maon. **25**Saul and his soldiers went to search for David, but someone told David that they were coming. So he and his men went farther south to stay on a rocky hill in the area of Maon. Saul found out about that, and he and his men chased David and his men farther into that desolate area.

26David and his men were on one side of the hill, and Saul and his soldiers were on the other side. David and his men were hurrying to get away, because Saul and his soldiers were rushing around the other side of the hill to try to surround them and capture them. **27**But then a messenger came to Saul and said to him, “Come quickly! The Philistine army is attacking the people in our land!” **28**So Saul stopped pursuing David. Instead, he and his soldiers

went to fight against the Philistine army. That is the reason why people call that place Sela Hammahlekoth. [29]David and his men also left that place, and they went to the area of Engedi, where there were many places where they could hide safely.

Chapter 24

[1]After Saul and his soldiers returned home from fighting against the Philistine army, someone reported to Saul that David and his men had gone into the desolate area near En Gedi. [2]When Saul heard that, he chose 3,000 of the best soldiers he could find anywhere in Israel. They went to search for David and his men among the {caves in the} rocky cliffs in that area. Those cliffs were so steep that only wild goats lived on them.

[3]As they searched, they came to a place where shepherds had built enclosures for their sheep in front of the entrances to caves. Saul went into one of the caves to use it as a toilet. He did not realize that David and his men were hiding farther inside that same cave. [4]David's men {saw Saul and} whispered to him, "Yahweh told you that he would put your enemy in a position where you could do anything you wanted to him. Look! He has done that right now!" So David crept quietly toward the entrance of the cave, and he cut off a piece of Saul's robe. [5]David then he returned to his men.

But he felt guilty for having cut off a piece of Saul's robe. [6]David told his men, "Yahweh is very displeased with me for doing that to my master, the man Yahweh appointed as king! Because Yahweh chose him to be the king, I should not have done anything hostile to him." [7]By saying that, David made his men move farther back into the cave away from Saul.

He did not allow them to kill him. After Saul left the cave and started to search for David again, [8]David then came out of the cave and shouted to Saul, "King Saul, my lord!" Saul turned around and looked, and David humbly bowed down with his face touching the ground. [9]Then he said to Saul, "You should not pay any attention to people who tell you that I actually want to hurt you! [10]Today you can clearly recognize that {what they say is not true.} Today Yahweh brought you into this cave, where I could have killed you. Some of my men told me that I should do that. But I spared your life. I told them that I would not harm you, my master, because you are the king whom Yahweh appointed. [11]Your majesty, look carefully at this piece of your robe that I am holding! I cut it from your robe, and that shows that I could have killed you, but I did not. From this you should understand that I am not wickedly planning to harm you. I have not done anything wrong to you, but you have been searching for me so that you can kill me. [12]I ask Yahweh to decide which of us has been doing what is right. I ask him to punish you if he determines that you have been doing wrong things to me. But I myself will do nothing to harm you. [13]There is an old saying that says, "Wicked people do wicked things." But I will do nothing to harm you.

[14]You, the king of Israel, did not have to bring this army out here to try to capture me. I am of as low status and as harmless as a dead dog! I am as unimportant as a single flea! [15]I ask Yahweh to be our judge and decide which of us has been doing what is right. I ask him to recognize that he should take my side in our dispute. I ask him to decide that you should not be able to kill me."

[16]When David finished saying this to Saul, Saul called back to him and said, "Is that really you speaking to me, David my son?" Then he cried loudly. [17]He told David, "You are a better person than I am. I tried to do something very bad to you, but you did something very good to me. [18]As you have just explained, Yahweh brought me into that cave where you could have easily killed me. But you did not do that. So you have done something very good to me. [19]No one lets his enemy go free once he has captured him! {But you have done that for me.} I hope that Yahweh will reward you for acting kindly toward me today. [20]Now I know that someday you will surely become king and that you will have a long and successful reign over the kingdom of Israel. [21]So now make me a solemn promise that you will not kill my whole family so that I have no descendants left in my clan. Wish that Yahweh will kill all of your descendants if you do that!"

22David solemnly promised Saul that he would not harm Saul's family. Then Saul went back home, and David and his men went back up into one of the places where they had been hiding.

Chapter 25

1Soon after that, Samuel died, and people from throughout Israel gathered and mourned for him.

They buried his body outside his home in Ramah. Then David and his men moved to the desolate area of Paran. **2**In the town of Maon there lived a man who kept his flocks at the nearby village of Carmel. He was very rich. He owned 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats. He was shearing his sheep at Carmel at this time. **3**This man's name was Nabal. He was a descendant of Caleb. His wife Abigail was a wise and beautiful woman, but Nabal himself was very cruel. He treated people very unkindly.

4One day while David and his men were in the desolate area nearby, someone told him that Nabal's workers were cutting the wool off his sheep. **5**So David decided to send ten of his soldiers {to ask Nabal respectfully for some of the food from the celebration he was hosting while they were cutting off the wool}. He told them, "Go to Carmel and visit Nabal and greet him warmly for me. **6**Then tell him this from me: 'I wish you all the best! I hope everything is going well for you and your family and for all of your possessions.

7I have a small request. People have told me that you now have workers cutting the wool from your sheep. My soldiers and I were in the same area where your shepherds were tending those sheep. But the whole time they were with us near Carmel, we did not harm them, and we did not steal any sheep from them. **8**You can ask your own servants about this, and they will tell you that it is true. We have come here at a time when you are celebrating, so I ask you please to be generous to us and send back with these men something from the feast that you have prepared for this occasion. David regards you respectfully as a benefactor.'"

9So David's men went to Carmel and told Nabal everything that David had told them to say for him. Then they waited for Nabal to reply. **10**But Nabal replied, "This David, this son of Jesse, does not deserve to receive anything from me! There are many slaves who are running away from their masters at the present time{, and he is just one of them}. **11**I have prepared food and drink for the men who are cutting the wool from my sheep. I have even killed some of my animals so that I can serve them meat. But I am not going to take any of those things and give them to a group of men who are just wandering the countryside."

12So David's men left and went back and told him all that Nabal had said to them. **13**When he heard this, David told his men, "{We are going to kill Nabal!} Each of you, fasten on your swords!" So they did, and David fastened on his own sword. Then 400 of the men went with David to Carmel, while 200 of them stayed behind to guard their supplies.

14One of Nabal's servants {found out what David and his men were planning to do, so he} went to Nabal's wife Abigail and told her, "Please listen. David sent some messengers here to speak politely with our master Nabal, but he only yelled at them. **15**All the time that we were close to them while we were in the fields, David's men were very kind to us. They did not harm us, and they did not steal anything from us. **16**The whole time we were with them while we were tending the sheep, they continually kept any people or animals from hurting us and from taking any sheep. **17**So please consider this situation and think of something that you can do about it. David has already decided to hurt our master and all of us in his household. Nabal is a very bad man, so he will not listen to anyone who tries to tell him what he should do."

18When Abigail heard that, she very quickly gathered 200 loaves of bread, two leather bags full of wine, the meat from five sheep, nearly 40 liters of roasted grain, 100 packs of raisins, and 200 packs of dried figs. She put all those things on donkeys. **19**Then she told her servants, "{Bring these things to David as fast as you can.} Do not wait for me. I will follow you as quickly as I can." But she did not tell her husband what she was doing.

20Abigail was riding on her donkey, and she was coming down the slope of a hill. Just then David and his men were coming down the slope of an opposite hill. So they met at the bottom. **21**David had been saying to his men, “It was useless for us to protect that man and all his possessions here in this desolate area. We did not steal anything that belonged to him. In return for our good actions toward him, he has acted badly toward us! **22**I hope that God will kill me if by tomorrow morning I have not killed Nabal and every male person in his household!”

23When Abigail saw David, she quickly got down from her donkey and bowed respectfully before him with her face touching the ground. **24**Then she came and knelt at David’s feet and said to him, “Sir, I accept the blame for the way we have mistreated you. But now please let me explain, and listen carefully to what I have to say to you. **25**Please do not pay any attention to how this bad man Nabal has insulted you. His name suits him perfectly. His name means “fool,” and he surely is foolish. Now I did not see the messengers you sent to him. {If I had, I would certainly have given them plenty of food from our feast.} **26**Please listen to me, sir. I swear by Yahweh and I swear by your own life that Yahweh {has allowed me to meet you here on the road in order to} prevent you from killing many people yourself instead of relying on Yahweh to protect you. I hope that anyone who is trying to hurt you becomes someone that no one should pay any attention to, just like Nabal. **27**{You have received} the food that I sent on ahead of me. It is a present for you and for the men who are with you. **28**So please forgive this offense, for which I consider myself responsible. Because you have been fighting against Yahweh’s enemies, he will certainly make you king of Israel and then allow many of your descendants to become king after you. So please do not do anything terrible that you will regret for as long as you live. **29**Even if someone searches for you to try to kill you, Yahweh your God will make sure that you stay alive, as if he had wrapped you up securely for protection. He will make your enemies die instead. They will die as swiftly as a stone flies that someone hurls from a sling. **30**Yahweh has promised to do good things for you, and he will do all those things for you. He will cause you to become the ruler of the Israelite people. When that happens, **31**you will not feel great guilt and grief. You will not have killed many innocent people yourself instead of relying on Yahweh to protect you. When Yahweh does the good things he has promised to do for you, then you will remember what I told you today {and you will be glad that you did what I said}.”

32David replied to Abigail, “I thank Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, for sending you to speak with me today. **33**I thank him for your wisdom, and I thank him that you kept me today from killing many people myself instead of relying on Yahweh to protect me. **34**I will swear something to you by Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, who has prevented me from hurting you. If you had not come so quickly to speak with me, not a single male in your household would have still been alive by dawn tomorrow.”

35Then David accepted the gifts that Abigail had brought to him. He told her, “You may return home and not fear that we will attack you. I surely agree with what you told me, so I will do what you have asked.”

36When Abigail returned home to Nabal, she found that he was having a big celebration such as kings have. He was feeling very happy, and he had gotten very drunk. So Abigail did not say anything at all to him that night {about her meeting with David}. **37**The next morning, when Nabal was no longer drunk, his wife told him how David and his men had been just about to kill him and all the other men in the household. He became so distressed that he had a stroke and could no longer move. **38**About ten days later Yahweh caused something further to happen to Nabal so that he died.

39When David heard that Nabal had died, he said, “I praise Yahweh! Nabal insulted me, but Yahweh has shown that I was right. He has prevented me from doing anything wrong, and he has punished Nabal for the wrong that he did to me.”

Then David sent messengers to Abigail to ask her if she would become his wife. **40**David’s servants went to Abigail at Carmel and told her, “David sent us to bring you to him so that you could become his wife.” **41**Abigail got up from where she was sitting and bowed down with her face touching the ground. Then she told the messengers to tell David for her, “I will gladly serve you as your wife. I will do any task you require, even washing the feet of your servants as a slave would do.” **42**Abigail quickly got on her donkey and went with David’s messengers. Five of her female servants went with her. When she arrived where David was, he married her. **43**David also married Ahinoam,

a woman from the city of Jezreel {near Carmel}. So both Abigail and Ahinoam were now also David's wives. **44**King Saul's daughter Michal was David's wife, but Saul had given her to Palti son of Laish, who was from the town of Gallim.

Chapter 26

1One day people who lived in the region of Ziph once again went to Saul while he was at Gibeah. They told him, "David is hiding somewhere on the hill of Hakilah, near the desolate area that people call Jeshimon."

2So Saul chose 3,000 of the best Israelite soldiers and led them to the desolate area in the region of Ziph to search for David. **3**Saul and his men set up their tents close to the road on the hill of Hakilah, east of the area of Jeshimon, but David and his men stayed in the desolate area. David found out that Saul had come to search for him, **4**He learned that by sending out some spies. They came back and told him that Saul had in fact come to their area.

5David decided to go at night and look at the place where {the spies told him} Saul's army had set up its tents. From a distance, he could see where Saul and his army commander, Abner, were sleeping. Saul was sleeping inside a barricade that the soldiers had made with the wagons in which they had brought their supplies. The rest of the army was sleeping all around Saul.

6When David saw this, he spoke with two of his men who were with him. These men were Ahimelech, who was from the Hittite people group, and Abishai, who was the son of Zeruiah and the brother of Joab. David asked them, "Which of you will go with me down into the camp where Saul is sleeping?"

Abishai replied, "I will go with you." **7**So that night David and Abishai crept into Saul's camp. They saw that Saul was asleep in the middle of the camp. Saul had stuck his spear into the ground near his head. Abner and the other soldiers were sleeping around Saul.

8Abishai whispered to David, "Today God has enabled you to kill your enemy! This is what I want to do. Allow me to kill Saul by plunging his own spear right through him into the ground. I will only need to strike him once. That first blow will kill him."

9But David whispered to Abishai, "No, do not kill Saul. Yahweh has appointed him to be king, so Yahweh will surely punish anyone who kills him." **10**David continued, "Instead, Yahweh may cause him to die, or he may die of some disease or of old age, or enemy soldiers may kill him in a battle. But I swear by Yahweh {that I will not kill Saul myself}. **11**I hope that Yahweh will never allow me to attack the king whom he has appointed. This is what we should do. Let us just take Saul's spear and water jug that are near his head. Then we should leave right away."

12So David took the spear and the jug that were near Saul's head. Then he and Abishai left. Yahweh had made Saul and his soldiers very sleepy, so they were all asleep during this time. So no one woke up and saw them or knew what they were doing.

13David and Abishai went across a valley and climbed up high on a hill opposite Hakilah. They were far away from Saul's camp.

14Then David shouted in the direction of Saul's army. He shouted to Abner, "I want to speak with you, Abner!"

Abner replied "Who are you? You should not be waking up the king by calling out like this!" **15**David replied, "You are a better soldier than any other man in Israel. So you should have protected the king whom you serve. Someone came into your camp tonight, and he could have killed your king. **16**You have failed in your duties as soldiers. I swear by Yahweh that someone should punish you and your men by executing you! You have not protected your master, whom Yahweh appointed to be the king. Here is proof that someone came into your camp tonight: the royal spear and the water jug that were close to the king's head are now missing!"

17Saul {woke up and recognized} David by his voice. He called out, “Is that really you speaking to me, David my son?”

David replied, “Yes, your majesty, I am the one speaking.”

18Then David added, “Sir, there is no reason for you to be chasing me. I have done nothing at all to harm you!
19Your majesty, please listen to me! If Yahweh {is punishing me for sinning} by causing you to want to harm me, I hope he will accept a guilt offering from me {and forgive me}. But if it is people who have caused you to be angry with me, then I hope Yahweh will make bad things happen to them! {If people have convinced you to want to harm me,} they are now forcing me to leave this land that Yahweh has given to the Israelites. By making me leave Israel, it is as if they are telling me to live somewhere else where the people worship different gods! **20**Now do not force me to die away from the land where Yahweh is present in a special way. I am as unimportant as a single flea, so you, the king, do not need to be chasing me! That makes no more sense than chasing one bird into the mountains when many birds of that kind live in nearby fields.”

21Then Saul said, “David, my son, I have sinned {by trying to kill you}. Please come back home. Today you considered my life to be very valuable, so you did not kill me. So I will not try to harm you anymore. I recognize that I have foolishly made a very big mistake.”

22David replied, “Look, here is your spear! Send one of your young men over here to get it. **23**Yahweh gave me the opportunity to kill you today, but I refused to do that, because you are the one whom Yahweh has appointed to be the king. When people treat others right and are loyal to them {as I have just done for you}, may Yahweh treat them the same way. **24**Just as I considered your life to be valuable {and spared it} today, I hope that Yahweh will consider my life to be valuable and rescue me from every danger.”

25Then Saul said to David, “My son David, I want Yahweh to do good things for you. I know that you will do great things very successfully.”

Then David left that place, and Saul went back home.

Chapter 27

1But David thought, “Some day Saul will capture me and kill me {if I stay here in Israel}. So the best thing that I can do is certainly to flee to the region of Philistia. If I do that, Saul will stop searching for me here in Israel, and I will be safe from him.”

2So David and his 600 men left Israel and went to the city of Gath {in the region of Philistia}. Achish son of Maok was the king of that city. **3**Achish agreed that David and his men could live in Gath. So all of the men brought their families there. David brought his two wives with him, Ahinoam from Jezreel and Abigail, Nabal’s widow, from Carmel. **4**When Saul learned that David had gone to live in Gath, he stopped pursuing him.

5One day David said to Achish, “If you are pleased with us, give us a place to live in one of the small villages in the countryside. We do not have to live here in the royal city with you.”

6Achish {agreed and} gave David the town of Ziklag at that time. (As a result, Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah ever since.)

7David and his men lived in the region of Philistia for a total of 16 months. **8**While they were living there, David and his men attacked communities of the Geshurite, Girzite, and Amalekite people groups. To do that, they went as far south as the region of Shur near the border of Egypt. Those people groups had lived in that area for a very long time. **9**Whenever David’s men attacked these communities, they killed all of the people who lived in them. Then they took their sheep and cattle and donkeys and camels and clothes. They brought those things back home with them, and David would go to talk with Achish.

10 Each time Achish would ask David, “Where did you go raiding today?” David would {lie to him and} sometimes say
that he and his men had attacked the people who lived in the Negev within the territory of Judah. Other times, he
would say that they had attacked the Jerahmeelites who lived in the Negev. And at other times, he would say that
they had attacked the Kenites who lived in the Negev. 11 David’s men never brought anyone alive back to Gath.
David thought, “If we do not kill everyone, some of them will tell Achish the truth about what we really did.” David
did that the whole time that he and his men lived in the region of Philistia. 12 Achish believed what David told him,
and he thought, “Because of what David has done, his own people, the Israelites, must now hate him very much. So
he will always have to stay here and serve me.”

Chapter 28

1 During the time when David was living near Gath, the people of Philistia gathered their army to attack the
Israelites. King Achish told David, “You must understand that you and your men have to join my men to attack the
Israelites.”

2 David replied, “We will go with you, and then you will see for yourself how well we will fight for you!”

Achish told him, “Very well, I will make you my personal bodyguard from now on.”

3 By this time, Samuel had died, and the Israelite people had mourned for him. Then they had buried him in Ramah,
his hometown. Also, before this, Saul had forbidden anyone in Israel to try to contact people who had died or to try
to talk to spirits that could tell them things that people otherwise could not know.

4 The Philistines assembled their troops and marched into Israel and set up their tents near the city of Shunem.
Saul gathered the Israelite army, and they set up their tents at Gilboa. 5 When Saul saw how many Philistine soldiers
had come to attack the Israelites, he became so afraid that his heart pounded. 6 Saul asked Yahweh to help him
know how he should fight against the Philistines, but Yahweh did not answer him. He did not give Saul any special
dream. The priest got no answer for him by drawing a stone from his sacred pouch. Yahweh did not give any
prophet a message for Saul. 7 Then Saul told his officials, “Find for me a woman who owns a pit that she uses to
contact people who have died. That way I can go to her and ask her to contact a dead person who can give me
advice.” One of his officials replied, “There is a woman in the town of Endor who owns that kind of pit.”

8 So that the woman would not know he was the king, Saul took off his royal robes and put on ordinary clothes.
Then he and two of his men went during the night to speak with that woman. Saul told her, “I will tell you the name
of a dead person. I want you to use your pit to cause that person’s spirit to appear so that I can speak with him.”

9 But the woman replied, “Certainly you know what Saul has done. He has forbidden anyone in Israel to try to
contact people who have died or to try to talk to spirits that can tell them things that people otherwise cannot
know. You should not be putting me in danger by asking me to do this. People would execute me if they found out
that I had done it.”

10 In response, Saul made her a sacred promise. He said, “I swear by Yahweh, if you do what I ask, no one will
punish you.”

11 So the woman asked, “Whom do you want me to make appear?”

Saul replied, “Make Samuel appear.”

12 {So she did that. But} when the woman saw Samuel, she screamed. She said, “You have tricked me! You are Saul!
{You will execute me for doing this!}”

13 Saul said to her, “Do not be afraid{, I am not going to execute you}. But tell me what you see.” The woman

said, “I see a spirit being coming up out of the ground.” 14 Saul said, “What does he look like?”

The woman replied, “An old man wearing a robe is appearing.”

Then Saul knew that it was Samuel. To honor him, Saul humbly bowed down with his face touching the ground.
15Samuel said to Saul, “Why have you bothered me by bringing me back to earth from the place where dead people go?”

Saul said, “I am in great danger. The Philistine army is about to attack my army, but God is no longer helping me. He no longer tells me what I should do by giving a message for me to any prophet or by giving me a dream. That is why wanted to speak with you. I want you tell me what I should do!” **16**Samuel said, “Since Yahweh himself is no longer helping you and has become your enemy, you should not ask me what you should do! **17**He had me prophesy earlier about what he would do, and now Yahweh is doing just what I said. He has decided that you will no longer be the king of Israel. Another Israelite will be the king instead of you—David. **18**The Amalekites made Yahweh very angry. He told you to punish them for him by destroying them completely. But you did not obey him. That is why he is now not telling you how to fight against the Philistines. **19**Yahweh will also enable the Philistine army to defeat you and all the other Israelite soldiers. By tomorrow you and your sons will be with me in the place where dead people go. Yes, Yahweh will enable the Philistine army to defeat the entire Israelite army.”

20{After Samuel said that, he disappeared.} Saul had been standing up, but he immediately fell flat on the ground. He was very afraid because of what Samuel had told him. He was also very weak because he had not eaten anything all that day and night.

21The woman came over to Saul and saw how very scared he was. She said to him, “Listen to me! I have done what you asked me to do. Because I did that, you could tell someone to execute me. **22**Since I did what you asked, please now do what I ask. Please let me serve you some food to eat. That way you will get enough strength back to return to your army.”

23But Saul refused. He said, “No, I will not eat anything.” But the men who had come with Saul urged him to eat something, and the woman did too, and finally he agreed. He got up from the ground and sat on a couch against the wall.

24The woman kept a calf in a stall near her house. She quickly slaughtered it and cooked it. She also took some flour and mixed it with olive oil and baked it, without adding any leaven, to make a flat loaf of bread. **25**She served the food to Saul and his men, and they ate it. Then, that same night, they got up and left.

Chapter 29

1The Philistine army assembled at a place that people called Aphek. The Israelites set up their tents {nearby} around a spring in the city of Jezreel. **2**To get to Aphek, the Philistine soldiers marched in groups of 100 soldiers that were parts of larger groups of 1,000 soldiers. The rulers of the Philistines commanded the entire army. David and his men marched at the end of the army with King Achish. **3**But {on the way to the battlefield} the Philistine rulers asked, “These Hebrews should not be here, marching with us to battle!” Achish

replied, “Their leader is David. He previously served King Saul of Israel, but now he has been living near me for more than a year. During all the time since he left Saul, he has been completely loyal to me.” **4**But the Philistine rulers became angry with Achish. They said to him, “You must send David and his men back to the city that you gave him! We do not want him to go with us into the battle. If he goes with us, we will have an enemy within our own army! He would make Saul happy with him again by killing our own soldiers! **5**Do not forget that David is the one about whom the Israelite women sing as they dance. They sing,

‘Saul has killed thousands of our enemies,

but David has killed tens of thousands of them!’”

6So Achish summoned David, and said to him, “I swear by Yahweh that I know I can trust you. I would like very
much for you to fight with me in the army. Since the day that you came to me, you have been completely loyal to
me. But the other rulers do not trust you. 7So you and your men must go back home. I am not sending you away
as an enemy, but as a friend. But the other rulers of the Philistines do not want you to remain with the army.”

8David replied, “But I have not done anything wrong! Since the time I first came to you until now, I have always
been completely loyal to you. So you should allow me to come with you and fight against your enemies!”

9Achish replied, “I know I can trust you as much as I would trust an angel from God. But the Philistine commanders
have said, ‘We will not allow David and his men to go with us into the battle.’ 10So you and the other Israelite men
who came to me with you must leave early tomorrow morning. Get up as soon as it becomes light and leave.”

11So David and his men got up early the following morning and returned to the area where the Philistine people
lived. But the Philistine army marched on towards the city of Jezreel.

Chapter 30

1David and his men got back to Ziklag after marching for two whole days and part of another day. When they
arrived, they discovered that the Amalekites, who had been raiding towns in the southern Judean wilderness, had
also raided Ziklag. When the Amalekites had attacked Ziklag, they had burned down all the buildings. 2But they had
not killed anyone. Instead, they had captured all the wives and children of David’s men. They had taken them with
them when they left.

3When David and his men arrived at Ziklag, they saw that the Amalekites had burned down the city and that they
had captured and taken away their wives and children. 4David and his men cried very loudly until they became so
weak that they could not cry any more. 5David’s two wives were among the women whom the Amalekites had
captured. They were Ahinoam from Jezreel and Abigail, Nabal’s widow, from Carmel. 6David’s men were very angry
that the Amalekites had taken away their {wives and} children. They were talking about killing David by throwing
stones at him. So David was in great danger. But he asked Yahweh his God to help him, and Yahweh made him
strong.

7Then David {asked Yahweh to guide him. He} told Abiathar the priest, “Please bring the sacred apron over here.”
So Abiathar brought it over to David. 8Then David asked Yahweh, “Should I and my men pursue the men who took
our families? Will we be able to catch up with them?”

Yahweh answered David {by means of the stones in the sacred apron}: “Yes, pursue them. Yes, you will catch up
with them. Yes, you will be able to rescue your families.” 9So David and the 600 men who were with him set out
from Ziklag {in pursuit of the Amalekites}. When they came to the Besor Ravine, some of men stayed there {with
their supplies}. 10There were 200 of those men. They stayed there at the ravine because they were too tired to
cross it. But David and the other 400 men continued to pursue {the Amalekites who had captured their families}.

11Some of David’s men happened to find an Egyptian man who was lying in a field. They picked him up and carried
him to David. They gave the man some water to drink and some food to eat. 12They also gave him part of a fig cake
and two packs of raisins. The man had not had anything to eat or drink since two days before, but after he ate and
drank, he felt refreshed.

13David asked him, “Who is your master? And where do you come from?”

He replied, “I am a youth from Egypt. I am a slave of an Amalekite man. But I became sick{, and it was difficult for
me to keep traveling with the raiding band}. So the day before yesterday, my master left me here. 14We had raided
the southern Judean wilderness where the Kerethites live. We also raided some other towns in Judah and the
southern Judean wilderness where the descendants of Caleb live. We also {attacked the city of} Ziklag and burned it
down.”

15David asked him, “Can you lead us to this group of raiders?”

He replied, “Swear to me by God that you will not kill me or give me back to my master. If you promise that, I will take you to them.” **16**{David agreed, so} the Egyptian man led David and his men to where the Amalekites were. Those men had captured many things from the regions of Philistia and Judah, and they had spread out around their camp eating and drinking and celebrating. **17**David and his men slaughtered them from sunset that day until the evening of the next day. There were 400 young men who rode away on camels in order to escape, but none of the other Amalekites escaped. **18**David and his men were able to recover everything that the Amalekites had taken, including David’s two wives. **19**They did not lose anything. They were able to rescue all of their family members. They also recovered all the things that the Amalekites had taken. David and his men brought all of this back to Ziklag. **20**They also took all of the sheep and cattle that the Amalekites had captured from other places. David’s men drove those animals ahead of their own animals. They announced, “These are animals that we captured in battle. They belong to David!”

21David and his men got back to where the other 200 men were waiting. Those were the men who had not gone with David because they were so exhausted. They had stayed at the Besor Ravine. {When they saw} David and his men {coming}, they went out to greet them. And David greeted them in return.

22But some of the men who had gone with David were bad men and troublemakers. They said, “These 200 men did not go with us. So we will not give them any of the things that we recovered. We will just allow each of them to take his wife and children and go back to his home.”

23David replied, “No, my friends, that would not be right. Yahweh protected us and enabled us to defeat the enemies who attacked our city. So what we captured from them was really something that Yahweh gave to us{, and we do not have a right to keep it to ourselves}. **24**None of the rest of us will agree with you about this. Here is what I have decided. The men who stayed here with our supplies will get the same amount as the men who fought in the battle. They will all receive the same amount.” **25**David made that a rule for the Israelite people, and they still follow that rule now.

26Then David and his men and their families returned safely to Ziklag. The leaders of some of the cities and towns in Judah {had helped David. They} were his friends. David sent them some of the things that he and his men had captured from the Amalekites. He sent messengers with those things to say, “Here is a present for you. These are things that we took from Yahweh’s enemies.”

27Here is a list of the cities and towns to whose leaders David sent gifts: Bethel, the city that people call Ramoth that is in in the southern part of Judah, Jattir, **28**Aroer, Siphmoth, Eshtemoa, **29**Rakal, the cities where the Jehrameelites live, the cities where the Kenites live, **30**Hormah, Bor Ashan, Athak, **31**Hebron, and all the other places where David and his men had often gone.

Chapter 31

1Meanwhile, the Philistine army attacked the Israelite army. The Israelites ran away from them to Mount Gilboa. But the Philistines killed many of them there. **2**The Philistines caught up with Saul and the three of his sons who were fighting with him. They killed all three of them, Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchi Shua. **3**The fighting became very fierce around Saul. The Philistine archers realized that he was the king of Israel, so they aimed many arrows at him and wounded him badly.

4Saul told the man who was carrying his weapons, “Take out your sword and kill me with it! That way these pagan Philistines will not come and kill me slowly with many small wounds and make fun of me while I am dying.”

But the man who was carrying Saul’s weapons was too afraid to do that. So Saul took out his own sword and threw himself on it. {The sword went deep into his body and killed him.} **5**When the man carrying his weapons saw that Saul had died, he also threw himself on his own sword. He died next to Saul. **6**So Saul, three of his sons, and the

soldier who carried Saul's weapons all died on that same day. So did all of the other Israelite soldiers who fought around Saul and protected him.

7The Israelite people who lived in the area north of the Valley of Jezreel and west of the Jordan River learned that the Israelite army had run away and that Saul and his sons had died. {They knew that no one would now defend them from the Philistines, so} they left their homes and ran away. Then the Philistines came and occupied the cities and towns that area.

8The day after the battle, the Philistine soldiers returned to take the weapons, armor, and clothing from the Israelite soldiers whom they had killed. They found the bodies of Saul and his three sons on Mount Gilboa. **9**They cut off Saul's head and took his weapons. Then they sent messengers throughout their land to proclaim the news of their victory in the temples where they worshiped their idols and publicly among the people. **10**They put Saul's weapons in the temple of their goddess Asherah. They also fastened the bodies of Saul and his sons to the wall that surrounded the city of Beth Shan.

11The people who lived in the city of Jabesh in the region of Gilead learned what the Philistines had done to Saul's corpse. **12**All their bravest soldiers marched all night to Beth Shan. They took the bodies of Saul and his sons down from the city wall. They brought their bodies back to Jabesh and burned them there. **13**Then they took the bones and buried them under a big tamarisk tree in Jabesh {like the one Saul would sit under when he was with his royal court}. Then, to show how sad they were, they ate very little food for seven days.

2 Samuel

Chapter 1

1After they defeated the Amalekites, David and the men who were with him returned to the city of Ziklag. By that time, the Philistines had already killed Saul. David and his men stayed there that day and the next one {without receiving any news of the battle between the Philistines and Israelites}. **2**But on the day after that, a young man unexpectedly arrived there who had been in the camp where Saul's soldiers had set up their tents. He had torn his clothes and put dust on his head to show that he was grieving. He came to David and knelt down and lay flat on the ground {to show respect for him}.

3David asked him, "Where have you come from?" The man replied, "I have fled here from the camp where the Israelite soldiers set up their tents."

4David asked him, "What happened? Please tell me about the battle!" The man replied, "The Philistines defeated our army so badly that our soldiers ran away. The Philistines killed many of them. They even killed King Saul and his son Jonathan."

5David asked the young man who told him this, "How do you know that the Philistines killed Saul and Jonathan?"

6The young man replied, "As it happened, I was on Mount Gilboa {where the Israelites had fled from the Philistines}. I saw Saul. {He was wounded and} leaning on his spear {for support}. I noticed that the Philistine chariot drivers and the commanders of their soldiers on horseback {had seen him, and they all} were rushing toward him. **7**Saul turned around and saw me, and he called out to me. I called back, 'What do you want me to do?'

8He asked me, 'Who are you?' I replied, 'I am an Amalekite.'

9Then he said to me, 'I can no longer fight, because I am in such pain from my many wounds. But those wounds will not kill me. So please use one of the weapons here to kill me yourself.'

10I knew that the Philistines would soon come and kill him, so he was not going to live anyway. So I used one of the weapons there to kill him. Then I took the crown he had been wearing and his armband. Here they are for you to see, sir."

11Then David took hold of his clothing and ripped it {to show how sad he was} All the men who were with him ripped their clothes as well. **12**They felt very sad, and they cried. They did not eat anything for the rest of that day. This was to honor and remember Saul and his son Jonathan and all of the Israelite soldiers whom the Philistines had killed in the battle. They were also very sorry for all of the Israelite people{, who had lost their king and many of their men and much of their territory}.

13But then David asked the young man who had told him about the battle, "Where do you come from?" He replied, "I come from an Amalekite family, but we are living here in Israel."

14David told him, "You should have respected Saul as the man whom Yahweh chose to be the king of Israel and not dared to kill him!" **15**Then David summoned one of his soldiers and told him, "Come over here and kill this man!" So the soldier came over and killed him. **16**David said to the Amalekite, "You yourself said, 'I killed the man whom Yahweh appointed to be the king.' So you admitted that you were guilty and deserved to die!" **17**Then David composed a sad song about Saul and Jonathan. **18**He called this song "The Bow." {When David became the king of Judah shortly afterward,} he told his officials to teach this song to the people of Judah. You can find the words in the Book of Jashar{. These are the words to the song}:

19"You Israelite people, the Philistines have pursued your great warriors even onto the mountains and killed them there!

It is very sad that these strong soldiers have died!

20Do not let anyone who lives in cities such as Gath and Ashkelon find out about this!

Otherwise, the women among the pagan Philistines will have victory celebrations.

21The shield of Saul, that mighty king, remains on the ground on Mount Gilboa.

No one is caring for it by rubbing it with olive oil.

So I hope there will never be rain or dew there again {so that the shield does not rust}.

I hope that there is so little rain that the fields do not even produce the small amount of grain that someone would bring as an offering.

22When Jonathan shot arrows from his bow at enemy soldiers, the arrows struck them so that they bled and died.

When Saul stabbed strong men with his sword, he wounded them so deeply that they died.

23People loved Saul and Jonathan. They delighted many people during their lives. And they died fighting together against their enemies.

They were warriors who could run fast, as eagles fly fast, and who were strong, as lions are strong.

24You women in Israel should mourn for Saul.

He made Israel a safe and prosperous place in which you had beautiful scarlet clothes and expensive jewelry and gold ornaments to wear.

25It is very sad that Jonathan, that strong soldier, has died while fighting a war!

The Philistines pursued him even onto a mountain and killed him there.

26Jonathan, my dear friend, I grieve for you. You were very dear to me.

You loved me in a wonderful way. It was much better than the fleeting feelings of romance that men and women have for each other.

27It is very sad that these strong soldiers have died.

Saul and Jonathan are not using their sword and bow anymore."

Chapter 2

1Sometime after that, David asked Yahweh, "Should I return to Judah and live in one of the cities there?" Yahweh replied, "Yes, return to Judah." Then David asked, "To which city should I go?" Yahweh replied, "You should go to Hebron."

2So David went to Hebron. He brought his two wives with him. They were Ahinoam, who was from the city of Jezreel, and Abigail, who was from the city of Carmel. She had been married to Nabal before he died. **3**David also brought the men who had been with him, together with their families. They all settled in the city of Hebron and in the surrounding towns and villages. **4**Then the men who were the leaders of the tribe of Judah came to Hebron. One of them poured olive oil on David's head to show they were appointing him to be the king of the tribe of Judah.

Someone told David how soldiers from the city of Jabesh in the region of Gilead had recaptured Saul's body {from the wall of Beth Shan} and how the people of that city had buried his body honorably.

5So David sent messengers to the people who lived in that city. He told the messengers to tell them, "I hope that Yahweh will do good things for you because you buried Saul's body honorably. By doing that, you treated Saul with the loyalty that he deserved as your king. **6**So this is what I hope will happen. I hope that Yahweh will be just as loyal to you all the time. And I will personally do good things for you because of the good way you treated Saul. **7**Now this is what I hope you will do. Even though Saul, who was your king, has died, do not become discouraged. Instead, continue to fight bravely against the Philistines. The people of the tribe of Judah have appointed me to be their king{, and I will lead their army to come and help you as soon as I can}."

8But instead, Abner son of Ner, who had been Saul's army commander, brought Ishbosheth son of Saul across the Jordan River to the city of Mahanaim. **9**So that Ishbosheth could rule over it, Abner steadily reconquered the territory that the Philistines had captured from the Israelites. Ishbosheth first ruled the region of Gilead east of the Jordan River, which the Philistines had not captured. Abner then reconquered the territory west of the Jordan River and north of the Valley of Jezreel, where the people of tribes such as Asher lived. Abner then reconquered the Valley of Jezreel itself. He then reconquered the territory west of the Jordan River and south of the Valley of Jezreel, where the people of tribes such as Ephraim lived. Abner was able to reconquer that territory all the way south to the territory of the tribe of Benjamin. That made Ishbosheth the king of all the territory that would later be the northern kingdom of Israel{after it divided from the southern kingdom of Judah}.

10Ishbosheth son of Saul was 40 years old when he started to rule over the Israelite people. He ruled them for two years. But David was the king of the people of the tribe of Judah. **11**David ruled them for seven and a half years while he was living in Hebron.

12One day Abner son of Ner led some soldiers from the army of Isbosheth son of Saul across the Jordan River from Mahanaim to the city of Gibeon. **13**Joab son of Zeruiah led a group of David's soldiers from Hebron to Gibeon. They found Abner and his soldiers near the large pool of water there. Joab had his soldiers stay on one side of the pool and sit down. Abner had his soldiers sit down on the other side.

14Then Abner said to Joab, "Let us have some of our soldiers fight each other while the rest of us watch!" Joab replied, "Yes, let us do that!"

15So Abner chose 12 men from his own tribe of Benjamin to fight on behalf of Ishbosheth son of Saul. They went over to the other side of the pool and fought against 12 soldiers whom Joab chose to fight on behalf of David. **16**Each soldier grabbed the man he was fighting against by the hair. That enabled him to thrust his dagger into that man's side. The result was that these 24 soldiers all killed each other. That is why people now call the place near Gibeon where they fought Helkath Hazzurim.

17Then the two whole groups of soldiers started fighting each other. It was a very fierce battle. But as they fought, David's soldiers defeated Abner and the soldiers from the other tribes of Israel.

18Joab, Abishai, and Asahel, Zeruiah's three sons, were in that battle. Asahel was able to run very fast, the way wild gazelles run very fast. **19**When Abner fled from the battle, Asahel chased him. No matter which way Abner went to try to escape, Asahel kept following him. **20**Abner looked behind him to see who was chasing him. He called out, "Is that you, Asahel?" Asahel answered, "Yes, it is!"

21Abner shouted back, "Chase somebody else! Try to catch one of the younger soldiers and defeat him and take his armor." But Asahel would not stop chasing Abner.

22So Abner shouted at him again, "Stop chasing me! Do not make me fight you, because I would kill you. Then I could never again have a peaceful relationship with your brother Joab, because he would want to get revenge against me."

23But Asahel refused to stop chasing Abner. So Abner let Asahel nearly catch him, then he suddenly stopped and swung the butt end of his spear into Asahel's stomach as he was still running fast toward him. The force was so great that the end of the spear went right through Asahel's stomach and came out his back. Asahel was wounded so badly that he fell down and died right there. When other soldiers came to the place where Asahel's dead body was lying in the roadway, they all stopped and stood there.

24But when Joab and Abishai saw what had happened, they ran off in pursuit of Abner. At sunset they came to the hill of Ammah, which is near the town of Giah along the road that leads into the desolate area near Gibeon. **25**The soldiers who had come with Abner were from the tribe of Benjamin. He had regrouped them into a line of battle on the top of that hill.

26Then Abner called out to Joab, "We should not continue this deadly battle any longer! You must realize that if we continue fighting, many people will suffer great harm. We are all Israelites, so please tell your soldiers right now to stop chasing us!"

27Joab replied, "Even if you had not said that, I would certainly have told my soldiers tonight to stop chasing their fellow Israelites. I swear by God that this is true."

28Then Joab blew a long, loud note on a ram's horn to signal that his soldiers should stop fighting. So all his men stopped where they were and no longer pursued the soldiers from the other tribes of Israel. That was the end of that battle.

29That night Abner led his soldiers back through the Jordan River valley. They crossed the river and marched all the next morning. Then they finally arrived back at Mahanaim.

30After his soldiers stopped chasing Abner, Joab gathered them all together. He counted them, and he found out that besides Asahel, 19 of them had died in the battle. **31**But David's soldiers had killed 360 soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin and among the soldiers from other tribes who had come to Gibeon with Abner. **32**Some of Joab's soldiers carried Asahel's body from the battlefield to the town of Bethlehem and buried it in the same tomb where people had buried his father. Then Joab and his soldiers marched all through the night, and at dawn they arrived back home at Hebron.

Chapter 3

1After that, the people who wanted Saul's son to be the next king fought a long war against those who wanted David to be the king. As the war continued, more people began to support David, while fewer people supported Saul's son. **2**After David moved to Hebron, his wives gave birth to sons. The oldest was Amnon, whose mother was Ahinoam from the city of Jezreel. **3**The next son was Chileab, whose mother was Abigail, the widow of Nabal, from the city of Carmel. The next son was Absalom, whose mother was Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, the king of the region of Geshur. **4**The next son was Adonijah, whose mother was Haggith. The next son was Shephatiah, whose mother was Abital. **5**The youngest son was Ithream, whose mother was Eglah, another one of David's wives. Their mothers all gave birth to these sons of David in Hebron.

6During the war between those who wanted Saul's son to be the next king and those who wanted David to be the king, Abner became a powerful leader among those who wanted Saul's son to be the king. **7**Saul had a secondary wife whose name was Rizpah. Aiah was her father. One day Ishbosheth accused Abner of having sexual relations with her.

8Abner became very angry about what Ishbosheth said to him. He said to Ishbosheth, "I am not some disloyal person from the tribe of Judah! From the beginning I have been loyal to Saul your father, to his brothers, and to his friends. And I have kept David's army from defeating you. So you should not be accusing me now of doing something wrong with this woman! **9-10**Yahweh solemnly promised David that he would make him the next king instead of one of Saul's descendants. He promised to make David the ruler not just of the tribe of Judah but also of

all the other tribes of Israel. He promised that David would rule all the territory extending from the city of Dan far in the north to the city of Beersheba far in the south. I am going to make that happen! If I do not, may God take away my position and my possessions and do even worse things to me." **11**What Abner said made Ishbosheth so afraid of him that he could not say anything to him in reply.

12Then Abner sent some of his men to David at Hebron with this message: "I am the most powerful leader among the other tribes of Israel. So if you make an agreement with me, then I can help you. I will make all the people of Israel want you to be their king." **13**David told the messengers to tell Abner. "All right, I am willing to make an agreement with you. But there is one thing you must do. Otherwise, I will not meet with you so that we can make that agreement in person. When you come to meet with me, you must bring my wife Michal, Saul's daughter, to me." **14**{Abner agreed to get Michal for David.} So David sent messengers to Ishbosheth to tell him, "I killed 100 Philistine soldiers and cut off their foreskins to give to Saul to pay for Michal to be my wife. So now, give her back to me!"

15Saul had taken Michal away from David and given her to Paltiel son of Laish. But Ishbosheth sent some men to take Michal away from Paltiel. **16**But when they took her, Paltiel followed her, crying as he went along. But when they reached the city of Bahurim, Abner told him, "You must go back home!" So he did.

17{Before going to see David,} Abner had sent messengers to the Israelite leaders to tell them, "I know that for a long time you have wanted David to be your king. **18**So this is what you should do. Make him your king now. Keep in mind that Yahweh spoke of David as someone who served him well. Remember that he said he would use David to rescue us Israelites, his people, from the Philistines and all the other enemies who would oppress us." **19**Abner had also spoken personally with the leaders of the tribe of Benjamin{, to which Saul had belonged}. The people of that tribe and of all the other Israelite tribes had agreed to make David their king. So Abner went to Hebron to tell David that personally.

20Abner respectfully brought 20 of his soldiers with him when he went to see David at Hebron. David served a feast to all of them. **21**After they had eaten, Abner said to David, "Sir, I know that you have wanted to be the king of all the Israelites. Let me now go and get leaders from all the tribes of Israel and bring them here so they can make an agreement with you to be their king." David agreed, and he allowed Abner and his men to leave safely.

22While Abner was visiting with David, Joab was leading David's soldiers to attack some of their enemies. They defeated those enemies and captured many valuable possessions. When they brought what they had captured back to Hebron, Abner was no longer there, since David had already sent him away safely. **23**When Joab and the soldiers who were with him arrived, someone told Joab that Abner had come there and talked with the king and that the king had allowed Abner to leave safely.

24So Joab went to the king and said, "You should not have done that! Listen to me! You had Abner, the commander of your enemy's army, right here where you could have made him your prisoner. But instead, you allowed him to leave, and now he has gotten away! **25**You know what kind of person Abner son of Ner is! He only pretended that he wanted to make an agreement with you. He really wanted to find out how you lead your armies and what plans you were making!"

26Then Joab left David and sent some messengers to get Abner. They found him at the cistern of Sirah and brought him back to Hebron. David did not know that they had done this. **27**When Abner returned to Hebron, Joab pretended he wanted to speak with him privately. He led him into the shaded area between the inner and outer gate in the city wall. But there he stabbed Abner in the stomach and killed him. Joab did that to get revenge against Abner for killing his brother Asahel.

28David later found out what had happened. He said, "I was not involved in any way in the murder of Abner son of Ner. So may Yahweh never punish me or any of my descendants who are kings after me for his death. **29**May Yahweh punish Joab and his relatives instead. I hope that there will always be someone in his family who has sores or who is a leper or who cannot walk without a crutch or who dies in battle or who does not have enough food to eat!"

30{David cursed Joab in this way because it was not right for} Joab and his brother Abishai to have murdered Abner. He had killed their brother Asahel in battle at Gibeon{, so they should not have taken revenge}.

31Then David told Joab and all of his soldiers, “I want you to tear your clothes and wear rough cloth {to show that you are sad that Abner has died}!” When men carried Abner’s body to his grave in a casket, King David walked right behind it {to honor him}. **32**They buried Abner’s body at Hebron. At Abner’s grave, King David cried loudly, and all the other people also cried.

33Then King David sang a sad song about Abner. He sang, “It was not right for Abner to die like a criminal! **34**No one tied his hands or put chains on his feet, as they would have done if he had been guilty of a crime. No, men murdered him unjustly!” After the other people heard David sing this song for Abner, they cried even more sadly.

35Later that day some people came and invited David to join in the customary funeral meal. But David refused {since he wanted to go without eating to show how sad he was that Abner had died}. He said, “I swear that I will not even taste any kind of food for the rest of this day {on which we buried Abner}! If I do, I hope that God will make very bad things happen to me.” **36**Everyone who was present at the funeral saw what David did, and it pleased them, just as other things that King David had done had pleased the people he ruled.

37{Because he had mourned deeply and sincerely for Abner,} the people of the tribe of Judah and the people of all the other tribes of Israel realized then that King David had not wanted Joab to kill Abner. **38**King David told his officials, “I hope you realize that a great leader has now died in Israel. **39**Even though Yahweh appointed me to be the king, I now feel weak. These two sons of Zeruiah, Joab and Abishai, are very violent. I cannot control them. So I hope that Yahweh will punish them as they deserve for this wicked thing that they have done!”

Chapter 4

1When Saul’s son Ishbosheth heard that Joab had killed Abner at Hebron, he lost his courage. The people of the Israelite tribes he ruled worried greatly about what would happen next. **2**Two of the officers who led groups of soldiers for Ishbosheth were brothers whose names were Baanah and Rechab. Their father was Rimmon. They came from the city of Beeroth. People considered them to be Benjaminites because Beeroth is within the territory that Joshua assigned to the tribe of Benjamin. **3**(But the {original Gibeonite} inhabitants of Beeroth had fled to the town of Gittaim, and they are still staying there now.)

4Saul’s son Jonathan had a son whose name was Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth was five years old when Saul and Jonathan died in the battle at Jezreel. When people came to Gibeah and told what had happened, Mephibosheth’s nursemaid picked him up and ran away {to escape from the Philistines}. She ran so fast that she dropped him. That injured his legs, so that he could no longer walk well.

5One day, Rimmon’s sons Rechab and Baanah traveled to Ishbosheth’s house. They arrived there at the hottest time of the day. Ishbosheth was lying on a bed in a cool part of his house where he rested when it was hot. **6-7**Rechab and Baanah acted as if they were going into the house to get some wheat to give to their soldiers. This allowed them to get as far into the house as Ishbosheth’s private bedroom. He was asleep on his bed. They killed him by stabbing him in the stomach with their swords. Then they cut off his head. Rechab and Baanah fled from the house, carrying Ishbosheth’s head. They walked all night through the plain along the Jordan River **8**so they could go to Hebron. When they got there, they presented Ishbosheth’s head to David. They told him, “Here is the head of Ishbosheth, the son of your enemy Saul, who tried to kill you! Your Majesty, today Yahweh has allowed you to get revenge on Saul and his descendants.”

9But David replied to them, “I swear by Yahweh, who was the one who kept Saul from killing me, that what I am about to say is true. **10**When a messenger came to Ziklag and told me that he had killed Saul, he thought he was bringing news that I would be glad to hear. But instead, I told one of my soldiers to kill him. He expected me to reward him for bringing this news, but I gave him what he really deserved. **11**If I punished him by killing him, I should certainly do the same to you. You two evil men murdered a man who had done nothing wrong, and you

killed him while he was sleeping on his bed in his own house! Because you murdered him, it is right for me to punish you by executing you. I am going to remove you completely from the earth!”

12Then David gave orders to his soldiers, and they killed Rechab and Baanah. They cut off their hands and their feet and hung them near the pool at Hebron. But they took the head of Ishbosheth and buried it respectfully in the tomb of Abner, there at Hebron.

Chapter 5

1Then the leaders of all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron. They told him, “Listen, {even though we belong to different tribes,} we are all Israelites. **2**Previously, even though Saul was our king, you were the one who led our soldiers into battle. Yahweh promised you, ‘You will be the leader of the Israelite people, who belong to me. You will be their king.’”

3Then, with Yahweh as their witness, all the leaders of the people of Israel came and made an agreement with David at Hebron that he would be their king. They poured olive oil on his head to show that he was now the king of the Israelites. **4**David was 30 years old when he first became the king of Judah. He was a king for a total of 40 years. **5**In Hebron, he had ruled over the tribe of Judah for seven and a half years. He would then rule over all the people of Judah and Israel for 33 more years in Jerusalem.

6Once he became king, David led his soldiers to Jerusalem to fight against the Jebusites who lived there. The Jebusites believed that David’s army would never be able to capture their fortress in the city. So they called out mockingly to David, “Even our soldiers who have become blind or crippled will be able to keep you from getting inside our city walls!” **7**But David’s army did indeed capture the fortress on Mount Zion. (Later David named it the City of David.) **8**On that day, David told his soldiers, “In order to attack the Jebusites, crawl up through the water supply tunnel into the city. That is how you will get to those crippled and blind soldiers who can supposedly defeat us. They are my enemies!” (Because David called them his enemies, people now say that no one who is blind or crippled may enter the royal palace.)

9After David and his soldiers captured the fortress, David moved into it. That was when he named it the City of David. David had people build more buildings in the area between the fortress and the Millo. **10**David continued to become more and more powerful because Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, was helping him.

11One day Hiram, the king of the city of Tyre, sent ambassadors to {make a peace treaty with} David. Hiram agreed to provide cedar trees to make lumber, and he also agreed that he would send carpenters and stone masons to build a palace for David. **12**Because Hiram did these things, David realized that Yahweh truly wanted him to be the king of Israel. He also realized that Yahweh wanted him to be a powerful king so that he could protect the Israelites, since Yahweh had chosen them as his own people.

13After David moved from Hebron to Jerusalem, he married more women as wives and secondary wives. All of those women gave birth to more sons and daughters of David. **14**The names of his sons whom his wives bore in Jerusalem were Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, **15**Ibhar, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia, **16**Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet.

17When the Philistines learned that the Israelites had made David their king, they assembled their army, and it marched toward Jerusalem to try to capture David. But David learned that they were coming, so he left the city and went to another place where he would be safe. **18**The Philistine army marched into the Valley of the Raphaites {southwest of Jerusalem} and set up its battle lines there. **19**David asked Yahweh, “Should I lead my soldiers to attack the Philistine army? Will you enable us to defeat them?” Yahweh replied, “Yes, attack them, because I will definitely enable your army to defeat them.”

20So David led his army to where the Philistine army was, and they defeated them there. Then David said, “Yahweh enabled us to break through the enemy battle lines just as a flood of water breaks through a dam!” So David

named that place Baal Perazim. 21The Philistine men left their idols there, and David and his soldiers took them away.

22But after that, the Philistine army marched into the Valley of the Raphaites again and set up its battle lines there once more. 23So David asked Yahweh again what he should do. Yahweh replied, “Do not attack their battle lines directly. Tell your soldiers to go around them and attack them from the back. Come through the grove of balsam trees. 24You will hear the sound of an army marching in the tops of the balsam trees. When you do, you will know that I am going ahead of you to enable your army to defeat the Philistine army. So when you hear that sound, attack them right away.” 25So David did what Yahweh told him to do. His soldiers defeated the Philistine soldiers and chased them from the city of Geba all the way west to the city of Gezer.

Chapter 6

1After this, David assembled all of his best soldiers once again. There were 30,000 of them. 2He led them to the city of Baalah in Judah so that they could bring the sacred chest from there to Jerusalem. People call that chest “The Box of Yahweh, the Commander of the Heavenly Armies.” Yahweh himself is invisibly present between the statues of the winged creatures on top of it. 3They went to the hilltop house of Abinadab. They used a new cart to carry the chest from there. Two oxen were pulling the cart, and Abinadab’s two sons Uzzah and Ahio were guiding them. 4In order to bring the sacred chest from Abinadab’s hilltop house, Ahio walked in front of the cart{, while Uzzah walked alongside it}. 5David and his soldiers and a large crowd of other Israelites were singing and dancing in Yahweh’s presence. People were playing musical instruments to accompany the singing and dancing, including wooden instruments, harps, lyres, tambourines, rattles, and cymbals.

6But when they came to the place in the area of Nacon where people threshed grain, the oxen tripped. {Because that made the cart tilt so that the sacred chest might have fallen off of it,} Uzzah put his hand on the sacred chest to steady it. 7Yahweh immediately became very angry with Uzzah for touching the chest. God killed him right there next to it.

8David became angry because Yahweh had punished Uzzah. David called that place Perez Uzzah, and that has been its name ever since.

9Then David became afraid of {what else} Yahweh {might do to punish them}, and he said, “It is too dangerous for me to try to bring the sacred chest to where I live in Jerusalem!” 10So David decided not to bring the sacred chest to the City of David where he lived. Instead, he had the people take it into a house that was there by the road. A man whose name was Obed Edom the Gittite lived in that house. 11The sacred chest stayed in the house of Obed Edom for the next three months. During that time, Yahweh made good things happen for him and his whole family.

12After that time, people told King David, “Because Obed Edom is taking care of the sacred chest, Yahweh is making good things happen for his family and all of his servants!” When David heard that, he {gathered many of the Levites and} went to Obed Edom’s house. Together they very joyfully brought the sacred chest from there to the City of David. 13On the way, once the Levites who were carrying the sacred chest had taken their first six steps, David had them stop. Right at that place, David killed a bull and a fat calf and offered them to Yahweh as sacrifices. 14David was wearing just a plain linen robe. He danced to honor Yahweh, leaping as high as he could and whirling around fast. 15David and a large crowd of Israelites brought the sacred chest to Jerusalem, shouting loudly and blowing ram’s horns.

16While they were bringing the sacred chest into the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul{, his wife, was on an upper floor of her house. She} looked through a window down onto the street. She saw {her husband} King David leaping and whirling to honor Yahweh. That made her feel disgusted with him {because she did not think a king should dress and act that way}.

17David had put up a tent for the sacred chest, and the Levites carried the sacred chest into it and set it up there. Then David made some offerings to Yahweh that he completely burned on an altar. He made other offerings whose

meat the people could share at a meal to celebrate this happy occasion. **18**When David finished offering those sacrifices, he asked Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, to do good things for the people. **19**Then he gave special gifts of food to all the Israelites who had come for the celebration. To each man and woman he gave a loaf of bread, a date cake, and a raisin cake. Then they all returned to their homes.

20Then David went home to ask Yahweh to do good things for his family. {His wife} Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet him. She told him, “As the king of Israel, you should not have acted so disgracefully today! You took off almost all of your clothes, and you let the female servants of your officials see you that way! Only immoral men take off their clothes in public as you did.”

21David replied to Michal, “I danced in that simple way in order to honor Yahweh! He chose me instead of your father or any member of his family to be the king of the Israelite people, who belong to him. I was celebrating to honor Yahweh! **22**And so I am willing to act even more humbly than that. I will do things that seem undignified. But those female servants you were talking about will respect me {as a king who serves Yahweh devotedly}!”

23Michal daughter of Saul did not have children for as long as she lived.

Chapter 7

1King David was living in his palace, and Yahweh caused the enemy people groups that surrounded the Israelites to stop attacking them. **2**So one day David said to the prophet Nathan, “Consider that I live in a palace that King Hiram’s craftsmen built for me from cedar wood. But the sacred chest is only in a tent {rather than a splendid temple}!”

3Then Nathan told King David, “Yahweh will help you, so you may do what you want to do.”

4But that night, Yahweh {appeared to} Nathan and told him, **5**“Go and give my servant David this message from me. He is not the one who will build a temple to hold the sacred chest on which I am invisibly present. **6**I have not been especially present in any building from the time when I brought the Israelites here from Egypt until now. Instead, I have been present in my sacred tent, moving from one place to another with the people. **7**I went with the Israelites wherever they traveled, but I never told any of the leaders whom I appointed to rule them that they should have built a temple for me out of cedar wood. **8**So give my servant David this message from me, Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies. Although he worked out in the fields caring for his father’s sheep, I appointed him to become the king of my Israelite people. **9**Remind him that I have protected him wherever he has gone. I have enabled him to defeat all the enemies who attacked him. Now I will make him very famous. He will become as famous as the greatest people who have ever lived on earth. **10-11**When my Israelite people were slaves in Egypt, violent people oppressed them. They also oppressed them in this land during the time when I was appointing judges to lead them. But this will not happen anymore. I have made a place where my people can live, and I will enable them to keep living there. They will no longer be afraid. I will make all their enemies stop attacking them. Tell David that I promise that I, Yahweh, will enable his descendants to rule as kings. **12**Tell David that after he has lived out his life and died, I will appoint one of his own sons to be king. One of his wives will give birth to this son in the future. I will make sure that he remains the king. **13**Assure David that that son of his will build a temple for me. No one will ever replace him as the king. **14**It will be as if I am his father and he is my son. When he does something wrong, I will punish him the way human fathers properly punish their sons. **15**But I will never stop showing kindness to David and his descendants the way I stopped showing kindness to Saul. I made him no longer the king so that David could become the king. **16**So assure David that his descendants will continually rule the kingdom of Israel after him. No other family will ever replace them as the royal family.”

17Nathan went and told David everything that Yahweh had told him when he appeared to him.

18{When he heard Nathan’s message,} King David went into the sacred tent and sat in Yahweh’s presence. He prayed, “Yahweh, my master, I am not a very important person, and I do not come from a very important family. So I do not deserve any of the things that you have done for me already. **19**And yet, Yahweh my Lord, you are telling

me that you want to do even more for me. After all, you have now told me that my descendants will reign over Israel long into the future! And you have said that you will require people to obey them as their kings. **20**Yahweh my Lord, I am not able to say anything further to you. But you know me so well that you know what I would say if I could say it. **21**You are going to do a wonderful thing {and make my descendants kings after me}. You are going to do this because you promised to make me a king, and because it is what you really want to do. It was also wonderful for you to tell me about this now. **22**This shows how great you are, Yahweh my Lord. We have never heard of any other God besides you. The gods that the people of other nations worship are nothing like you. **23**No other nation in the world is like us, your Israelite people. None of the gods that other people groups worship rescued them so that those people would belong to them. You rescued us from being slaves in Egypt. You also rescued us from enemy nations {here in Canaan} that thought their gods would enable them to defeat us. You did miracles to enable us to settle in this land. Because of the powerful things you have done, people throughout the world now respect you. **24**You caused us Israelites to be your people forever, and you, Yahweh, have become our God! **25**Yahweh, my God, you have promised to do wonderful things for me and my descendants. So please do make those things you said happen always. **26**When that happens, you will become famous forever. People will exclaim, 'Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, is the God who rules Israel!' And you will make sure that a descendant of mine will always rule the Israelites. **27**I am confident that you will do this, because you, Yahweh, have chosen us Israelites to be your people. You have revealed to me that you will make some of my descendants kings. For that reason, I have been bold enough to pray like this to you. **28**So now, Yahweh my Lord, because you are God, we can trust that you will do what you promise. You have promised to do these good things to me. **29**So now I pray that it will please you to do good things for my descendants. Please enable them to keep ruling your Israelite people. Yahweh my Lord, you have promised these things, and so I know that you will always keep doing good things for my descendants."

Chapter 8

1Some time later, David and his army defeated the Philistine army. They captured Metheg Ammah and made the Philistines subject to the Israelites.

2David and his army also defeated the Moabite army. Afterwards, David forced their soldiers to lie down on the ground {close to each other in a long line}. His soldiers went down the line and measured two lengths of a rope. They killed all of the Moabite soldiers in that part of the line. Then they measured one length of that rope and let the Moabite soldiers in that part of the line live. They continued to do this all the way down the line. The rest of the Moabites had to accept David as their ruler. Every year they had to give him the payment that he demanded.

3David's army also defeated the army of Hadadezer son of Rehob, who ruled the region of Zobah in Aram. That happened when Hadadezer led his army out to try to regain power over his territory, which bordered the Euphrates River. **4**David's army captured 1,700 of Hadadezer's soldiers who were chariot drivers, and they also captured 20,000 footsoldiers. They crippled most of the horses that had pulled chariots. But they spared 100 of the horses {for their own use}.

5Then an army of Arameans from the kingdom whose capital was the city of Damascus came to help King Hadadezer's army. But David's soldiers killed 22,000 of those Arameans. **6**Then David stationed groups of his soldiers in that kingdom. Those Arameans had to accept David as their ruler. Every year they had to give him the payment that he demanded. Each time David led his soldiers into battle, Yahweh enabled them to win victories over their enemies.

7Some of Hadadezer's soldiers had carried shields that had a plating of gold. King David's soldiers captured those shields and brought them to Jerusalem. **8**They also brought to Jerusalem large quantities of bronze from Betah and Berothai, two cities in Hadadezer's kingdom.

9When Toi, the king of the city of Hamath, heard that David's army had defeated the entire army of King Hadadezer, **10**he sent his son Joram to make a peace treaty with King David and to congratulate him for defeating Hadadezer's

army. Toi congratulated David because Hadadezer's army had fought many times against his own army. Joram brought David many articles of gold, silver, and bronze as gifts.

11King David dedicated all those items to Yahweh, just as he had dedicated the silver and gold that his army had captured from the nations they had conquered. **12**They had taken valuable items from the Arameans, Moabites, Ammonites, Philistines, and Amalekites. They had also captured many valuable items from Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zobah.

13David became even more famous after his army killed 18,000 Aramean soldiers in a battle in the Valley of Salt.

14David stationed groups of his soldiers throughout the region of Edom. The Edomites had to accept him as their king. Each time David led his soldiers into battle, Yahweh enabled them to win victories over their enemies.

15So David ruled over all the Israelite people. As king, he decided the people's cases, and he judged them fairly. **16**Joab son of Zeruiah was the army commander. Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud, was the man who reported to the people everything that David decided that they should do. **17**Zadok son of Ahitub and Ahimelech son of Abiathar were the priests. Seraiah was the official secretary. **18**Benaiah son of Jehoiada was the commander of David's elite corps of bodyguards. David's sons were his advisors.

Chapter 9

1One day David asked some of his officials, "Are there any descendants of Saul still living? I promised Jonathan that I would act kindly toward his family, and I would like to do that if I can."

2They told him that Saul's family had a household official whose name was Ziba. So David sent messengers to summon Ziba. When he arrived, King David asked him, "Are you Ziba?" He replied, "Yes, your Majesty, I am."

3Then King David asked him, "Is there anyone still alive in Saul's family toward whom I can act kindly, as I promised God that I would do?" Ziba replied, "Yes, there is one son of Jonathan who is still alive. But he is not able to walk."

4Then the king asked him, "Where is he?" Ziba replied, "I can tell you that he is living in the house of Machir son of Ammiel in the city of Lo Debar."

5So King David sent messengers to Machir's house in Lo Debar, and they brought Mephibosheth to Jerusalem.

6When Mephibosheth came to David, he knelt down with his face on the ground, to show respect. Then David said, "Mephibosheth." He replied, "What may I do for you, your Majesty?"

7David said to him, "Do not be afraid. You can be sure that I am going to be kind to you because Jonathan your father was my friend. I will give back to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul. And I want you to always eat meals with my family in the royal palace."

8Mephibosheth bowed in front of David again and said, "Sir, I am as worthless as a dead dog. I do not deserve for you to act kindly toward me!"

9Then the king summoned Saul's servant Ziba. He told him, "I am now giving Mephibosheth everything that belonged to your master Saul and his family. **10**You and your sons and your servants must plow the land and plant crops and harvest them for Mephibosheth's family. That way they will have food to eat. Mephibosheth will eat meals regularly with me in my palace." (Ziba had 15 sons and 20 servants.)

11Ziba replied to the king, "Your Majesty, I will do everything that you command me to do about this." After that, Mephibosheth always ate with David's family as if he were one of his sons.

12 Mephibosheth had a young son named Mica. All of Ziba's family and servants became servants of Mephibosheth.
13 So Mephibosheth came to live in Jerusalem, since he always ate meals with David's family in the royal palace. He was still not able to walk, because he had injured both of his legs.

Chapter 10

1 Sometime later, Nahash, the king of the Ammonites, died. His son Hanun became the next Ammonite king. 2 David thought to himself, "Nahash was kind to me, so I will be kind to his son Hanun." So David sent some of his officials to tell Hanun that David was sorry that Hanun's father had died. When those messengers arrived in the land of Ammon,

3 the Ammonite military leaders said to King Hanun, "You should not think that when David sent these men to tell you he is sorry that your father died, he did that to honor your father. He sent them here to look around the city to determine how his army can conquer us!" 4 {Hanun believed what they said.} So he commanded some of his soldiers to seize David's officials and {insult them by} shaving off one side of their beards. He also had them cut off the lower part of their robes so that their buttocks would show. Then he made them leave Ammon and go back to Israel.

5 This made the men feel very ashamed. When David found out about what Hanun had done to his officials, he sent messengers to meet them on their way back to Jerusalem. {The messengers met them at the city of Jericho.} They told the men, "The king says you may stay here at Jericho until your beards have grown back and only return home after that."

6 Then the Ammonite leaders realized that they had greatly insulted David. So they sent some men to hire some soldiers from other nearby areas to help defend them. They hired 20,000 soldiers from the Aramean regions of Beth Rehob and Zobah. They also hired 1,000 soldiers from the army of the king of Maacah and 12,000 soldiers from the region of Tob.

7 When David heard about that, he sent Joab with all of the best Israelite soldiers to fight against them. 8 The Ammonite soldiers came from their city and formed a battle line in front of its wall. At the same time, the foreign soldiers whom their king had hired from Zobah, Rehob, Tob, and Maacah formed a separate battle line in the open fields nearby.

9 Joab saw that there were enemy armies in front of his troops and behind his troops. So he chose some of the best Israelite soldiers and put them in position to fight against the soldiers who were in the fields. 10 He told his brother Abishai to command the rest of the soldiers. They would oppose the Ammonite soldiers who had formed a battle line in front of their city wall. 11 Joab told Abishai, "If the soldiers from Aram are too strong for my men to defeat, then your men must come and help us. But if the Ammonite soldiers are too strong for your men, then my men will come and help them. 12 We must be strong and fight hard so that our enemies do not defeat us and then come and kill our people and destroy the cities in Israel, where we worship the true God. We will depend on Yahweh to make the right army win this battle."

13 Then Joab and the soldiers he commanded advanced to attack the army of Aram. {They defeated the Arameans so badly that} the Arameans ran away from them. 14 When the Ammonites saw that the Arameans were running away, they also ran away from Abishai and the soldiers he was commanding. They retreated back inside their city. So Joab and his army stopped fighting against them and went back to Jerusalem.

15 The Arameans thought about how the Israelite army had defeated them. They decided to gather a much bigger army. 16 King Hadadezer summoned a great number of soldiers from the Aramean kingdoms that were on the other side of the Euphrates River. They gathered at the city of Helam. Hadadezer had his own army commander, Shobach, lead this army.

17When David learned about this, he gathered all of the Israelite fighting men and led them across the Jordan River. They marched to Helam. The Aramean army formed a battle line there, and the two armies fought. **18**{The Israelites defeated the Arameans so badly that} the Aramean soldiers ran away from the Israelite soldiers. David and his army killed 700 of their chariot drivers and 40,000 other soldiers. They also wounded Shobach, Hadadezer's army commander, so badly that he died on the battlefield. **19**Then all the kings who has been Hadadezer's subjects thought about how the Israelites had defeated their combined armies. They decided to make a peace treaty with the Israelites. They agreed to accept David as their king. The Arameans would not help the Ammonites anymore after that, because they were afraid of Israel.

Chapter 11

1The following spring, at the time when kings usually led their armies to fight against their enemies, David sent out his commander Joab with his officers and the rest of the Israelite army. They fought the Ammonites and severely defeated them. Then they surrounded Rabbah{, their capital city,} and tried to capture it. But David himself stayed in Jerusalem.

2Late one afternoon, after David had finished sleeping during the heat of the day, he got up and walked around on the flat roof of his palace. From there, he could look down and see a woman who was bathing in the enclosed courtyard of her house. The woman was very beautiful. **3**David sent someone to find out who she was. He returned and told David, "That woman is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam. She is the wife of Uriah the Hittite."

4But David sent messengers to get her anyway. They brought her to David, and he had sexual relations with her. (She had just finished performing the rituals to make herself pure after her menstrual period.) Then Bathsheba went back home. **5**Later, she realized that she was going to have a child. So she sent a messenger to tell David this news.

6So David sent a message to Joab. He said, "Tell Uriah the Hittite to come back to Jerusalem so that I can speak with him." So Joab sent Uriah to go and speak with David. **7**When he arrived, David asked whether Joab was well, whether the other soldiers were well, and whether the Israelites were doing well fighting the war. **8**Then David told Uriah, "Now go home and relax for a while." So Uriah left, and David sent someone to bring some special food to Uriah for him to enjoy. **9**But Uriah did not go home. Instead, he slept at the palace entrance with the palace guards.

10The next morning, someone told David that Uriah had not gone to his house that night. So David summoned him again. He asked him, "Why did you not go home and relax last night? You needed to rest after walking so far to get here."

11Uriah replied, "The soldiers of Israel and Judah are camping in the open fields. Even our commander Joab and his officers are sleeping in tents like the rest of us. We brought the sacred chest with us, and it is also in a tent. {As a soldier who is part of this military campaign,} it would not be right for me to go to my home, enjoy food and drink, and have sexual relations with my wife. I swear by your life that I would never do such a thing!"

12Then David said to Uriah, "Stay here another day, and I will let you return to the battle tomorrow." So Uriah stayed in Jerusalem that day and that night. **13**That evening, David invited Uriah to dine with him in the palace. David gave Uriah so much wine to drink that he got drunk. But after the meal, Uriah still did not go home. Instead, he slept that night on a cot in a room with the palace guard.

14David {found out that Uriah had not gone home, so} the next morning he wrote a letter to Joab and gave it to Uriah to bring to him. **15**In the letter, he wrote, "Put Uriah in the front line at the place where he will be in the greatest danger. Then command the soldiers who are supporting him to retreat. That way our enemies will wound him so badly that he will die."

16{When Joab got the letter,} he carefully observed the city's defenses. He found a place where the Ammonites had put many of their best soldiers. So he put Uriah in the front line there. **17**The Ammonite soldiers came out from that

part of the city and fought with Joab's soldiers. They killed several of David's soldiers. Uriah was one of the soldiers they killed.

18 Then Joab sent a messenger to bring David news about what had happened in the battle. 19 He told the
messenger, "Tell David the news about what happened in the battle. Once you finish telling him, 20 David may
become angry {because we allowed the Ammonites to kill some of our soldiers}. He may tell you, 'Your soldiers
should not have gone so close to the city to fight! You should have known that the Ammonite soldiers would shoot
arrows at you from the top of the city wall! 21 You must remember how Abimelech son of Jerubbesheth died! A
woman who lived in Thebez threw a heavy millstone onto him from the top of a tower, and that killed him. So our
troops should not have gone near the city wall!' If the king says this, then tell him that his soldier Uriah the Hittite
also died in the battle."

22 So the messenger went and told David everything that Joab had told him to say. 23 The messenger said to David,
"The Ammonite soldiers organized an attack against us. They came out of the city to fight against us in the fields.
We were able to force them to retreat right back to the city. 24 But then their archers shot arrows at us from the top
of the city wall. They killed some of your soldiers, and Uriah the Hittite was one of the soldiers they killed."

25 David said to the messenger, "Go back to Joab and tell him, 'Do not feel badly about what happened, because no
one ever knows who might die in a battle. Make an even stronger attack against the city and conquer it.' Encourage
Joab by telling him those things."

26 When Uriah's wife Bathsheba heard that her husband had died, she mourned for him. 27 After her time of
mourning ended, David sent messengers to bring her to the palace, and he married her. She later gave birth to a
son whose father was David. But Yahweh was very displeased with what David had done.

Chapter 12

1 Yahweh told the prophet Nathan what David had done, and he sent Nathan to correct David. Nathan came and
told him a story {to help him recognize that he had done was very wrong}. He said, "Once there were two men in a
certain city. One man was rich and the other was poor. 2 The rich man owned a lot of sheep and cattle. 3 But the
poor man had only one little female lamb, which he had bought. He raised the lamb, and it grew up with his own
children. He would give the lamb some of his own food and let it drink from his cup. He let the lamb sleep as he
held it next to him. The lamb was like a daughter to him.

4 One day a visitor came to see the rich man. The rich man did not want to take one of his own sheep or cattle and
kill it to prepare a meal for his guest. Instead, he sent men to take the poor man's lamb. Then he had someone kill
it and prepare it as a meal for his guest."

5 When David heard that, he became very angry with the rich man. He told Nathan, "I swear by Yahweh that I want
to execute the man who did that! 6 {I cannot actually execute him, but at least} he must pay back four lambs to the
poor man for so cruelly taking his one lamb."

7 Nathan said to David, "You have acted like the man I told you about. Now this is what Yahweh, the God whom we
Israelites worship, says to you: 'I was the one who chose you to be the king of Israel. When Saul was trying to kill
you, I was the one who rescued you. 8 I gave you all of his property. I let you marry the women who had been his
wives and concubines. I made you king over Israel and Judah. And if you had told me that you were not content
with all that I had given you, I would have given you even more! 9 But you have not taken seriously what I
commanded {when I said that my people must not commit adultery or murder}. You have done things that I
consider to be very evil! You arranged for Uriah the Hittite to die in battle, and after the Ammonite soldiers killed
him, then you took his wife as your own wife! 10 You did not respect me. Instead you took Uriah's wife to be your
wife. As a result, people in your family will constantly be killing each other.' 11 This is what Yahweh says to you: 'I am
going to make someone from your own family cause disaster for you. I will take your wives away from you and give
them to that person instead. He will have sexual relations with them in public. And you will know about it. 12 While

you tried to make sure that no one found out about what you did, I will make this happen in public. That way people throughout Israel will either see it or hear about it.'"

13David replied, "I have sinned against Yahweh." Nathan said to David, "Yahweh has forgiven you for sinning. He is not going to punish you by killing you for committing this sin. **14**But you have shown great contempt for Yahweh by doing this. So the son you have just had is going to die."

15Then Nathan went home. Uriah's wife had given birth to a baby boy who was David's son. Yahweh caused him to become very sick. **16**So David prayed to God that the child would not die. {To show how concerned he was,} he ate very little food. He also did not sleep in his bed at night. Instead, he slept on the floor of his room. **17**His most senior servants came and urged him to get up off the floor. But he refused to get up, and he refused to eat any meals with them.

18After a week, the baby died. David's servants were afraid to tell him that. They said to each other, "Consider that while the baby was still alive, we encouraged him to take better care of himself, but he refused. Now if we tell him that the baby has died, he may do something to hurt himself!"

19David saw that his servants were whispering something to each other. He recognized that the baby must have died. So he asked them, "Is the baby dead?" They replied, "Yes, he is dead."

20Then David got up from the floor. He bathed himself, put olive oil on his hair and skin, and put on different clothes. Then he went to Yahweh's sacred tent and worshiped him there. After that, he came home. He asked his servants to bring him some food, and when they did, he ate it.

21Then his servants said to him, "We do not understand why you have done this! While the baby was still alive, you cried for him and refused to eat. But now that the baby has died, you have gotten up and eaten some food!"

22He replied, "While the baby was still alive, I ate little food and wept because I thought, 'Perhaps Yahweh will be merciful to me and allow the baby to live.' **23**But now that the baby is dead, there is no reason for me to go without food anymore. I cannot bring him back to me. Someday I will go to where he is, but he will not return to me."

24Then David comforted his wife, Bathsheba. He had sexual relations with her, and she became pregnant again and gave birth to another son. David named this boy Solomon. Yahweh loved that little boy. **25**Yahweh told the prophet Nathan to tell David to name the baby boy Jedidiah, since he loved him.

26Meanwhile, Joab's soldiers were still fighting to conquer Rabbah, the Ammonite capital city. They captured the part of the city where the king had his palace. **27**Then Joab sent messengers to David to tell him, "My troops have been attacking Rabbah, and we have captured the part of the city that is down by the river. **28**Now assemble all the rest of our soldiers. Come and attack the fortress that is on higher ground and capture it. If you do not do that, my soldiers will capture the fortress, and then people will give the whole city a new name, The City of Joab."

29So David assembled the rest of the Israelite soldiers. They went to Rabbah and attacked it, and they captured it. **30**Then David took the golden crown off the head of their king and put it on his own head. It weighed 34 kilograms, and it had a very valuable stone in it. David's soldiers also took many other valuable things from the city. **31**Then the Israelite soldiers brought the Ammonite people out of the city and forced them to work for them using saws, iron picks, and iron axes. David's troops also forced them to make bricks. David's soldiers made the people who lived in the other Ammonite cities work for them in the same way. Then David and all of his army returned to Jerusalem.

Chapter 13

1After this, the trouble that Nathan had announced began in David's family. David's son Absalom had a beautiful sister whose name was Tamar. Another of David's sons, Amnon, wanted to have sexual relations with her. **2**He wanted so badly to have sexual relations with his half-sister Tamar that he felt sick. But because she was an

unmarried young woman{, she lived separately from the men in the palace, so} Amnon thought he would never have a relationship with her.

3But Amnon had a friend whose name was Jonadab. He was the son of David's brother Shimeah. Jonadab knew well how to deceive people in order to get what he wanted.

4One day Jonadab said to Amnon, "Even though you are the king's son, every day {when I see you,} you seem depressed. Please tell me why." Amnon replied, "I feel sexual desire toward Tamar, the sister of my half-brother Absalom."

5Jonadab said to him, "Lie down on your bed and pretend that you are sick. Your father will come to visit you. {Tell him that you do not feel like eating anything, but you might eat} if someone prepared food while you were watching so you could see what the person was doing and if the person then served you the food directly. Suggest that you half-sister Tamar could come and do this for you."

6So Amnon lay down and pretended that he was sick. When King David came to visit him, Amnon told him, "{I might eat something if} someone made a couple of pancakes for me while I was watching and then served them to me directly. Please allow my half-sister Tamar to come and do that for me."

7So David sent a message to Tamar in the palace. He told her, "Amnon your half-brother {is sick, so} please go to his house and prepare some food for him {so that he will eat}." **8**So Tamar went to Amnon's house. He was lying on a couch there. While he was watching her, she took some dough and kneaded it, then she formed it into some pancakes and baked them. **9**She brought the pan and served the pancakes from it onto a plate in front of Amnon. But he refused to eat them. He said to everyone else who was present, "All the rest of you, leave me!" So they all left.

10Then Amnon said to Tamar, "{I need to lie in bed, so} bring the food into my bedroom and serve it to me there." So Tamar brought the pancakes that she had made into his bedroom. **11**But when she brought them close for him to eat them, he grabbed her and told her, "I want to have sex with you!"

12She replied, "No, do not force me to have sex with you! Israelites should not do things like that. You are my half-brother! So do not commit this crime against me! **13**If you did, I would always have shame afterwards. And as for you, you would be acting like the Israelite men who do wrong things without regard for God. So I plead with you, ask the king {to allow you to marry me}. I am sure he would agree to let me become your wife." **14**But he refused to do what she said he should do. He was stronger than she was, so he forcibly had sexual relations with her.

15Afterwards, Amnon felt great hatred toward her. He hated her much more than he had desired her. He told her, "Now I want you to leave!"

16But she told him, "No! You should not send me away. That would be very wrong. It would be worse than what you just did to me!" But again he refused to do what she said he should do.

17Instead, he summoned his personal servant and told him, "Take this woman outside, away from me, and lock the door so that she cannot come in again!" **18**So the servant put her outside and locked the door so that she could not come in again. Now Tamar was wearing a long robe. That was the clothing that the unmarried daughters of the king customarily wore at that time.

19But {to show how distressed she was,} Tamar put ashes on her head. She tore the long robe that she was wearing. She also placed her hand on her head. As she went away, she kept screaming.

20Her brother Absalom {saw her and} said to her, "Did your half-brother Amnon force you to have sex with him? Please, my sister, do not tell anyone. He is your half-brother. Do not let this bother you." Then Tamar went to live in Absalom's house, and she never got married.

21When King David learned what had happened, it made him very angry {but he did not do anything about it}.
22Absalom hated Amnon because he had forcibly had sexual relations with his sister Tamar. But he did not say anything to Amnon about this{, because he did not want Amnon to suspect that he wanted to kill him}.

23However, two years later, Absalom hired men to cut the wool off his sheep at Baal Hazor, where he lived. That place is near the tribal land of Ephraim. He was going to host a celebration when they finished cutting the wool off the sheep, and Absalom invited all the king's sons to come to the celebration. **24**Absalom went to King David and said to him, "Sir, I have workers shearing my sheep {and we are going to celebrate when they finish}. Please come with your officials to celebrate with us!"

25But the king replied, "No, my son, it would not be good for all of us to come. That would be too great an expense for you." Absalom kept inviting him, but King David finally refused. Instead, he said that he hoped that God would make them happy while they celebrated.

26Then Absalom said, "If you will not come, please send my half-brother Amnon {the crown prince} with us {as your representative}." But the king replied, "You do not need to invite him to the celebration either."

27But Absalom insisted, and finally King David agreed to let Amnon go with Absalom. He sent all of his other sons with him.

28At the celebration, Absalom told his servants, "Pay attention to these instructions. Once Amnon has become a bit drunk from the wine, I will shout out, 'Kill Amnon!' When I say that, you must kill him. Do not be afraid. You will be doing this only because I told you to do it. So be very brave {and do it}!" **29**So Absalom's servants did what Absalom told them to do. They killed Amnon. When the rest of David's sons saw what had happened, they left the celebration. They got onto their mules and escaped by riding away fast.

30While they were still on their way home, someone {who had fled when the servants first killed Amnon} rushed back and reported {incorrectly} to David, "Absalom has killed all of your other sons! None of them is still alive!"
31When King David heard this, he got up from his throne, tore his clothes, and then lay down on the ground {to show how sad he was}. His officials also tore their clothes, and they stood around him {to show their sympathy}.

32But Jonadab, the son of David's brother Shimeah, said, "Your Majesty, please do not believe that Absalom has killed all your sons. I am sure that only Amnon is dead. I say this because Absalom has wanted to kill him ever since the day that Amnon raped his sister Tamar. **33**So, your Majesty, please do not let the thought that all your sons may be dead cause you great distress. I am sure that only Amnon is dead."

34(Absalom had fled {from the celebration after his servants killed Amnon}.) One of the city guards looked out and saw a large crowd of people coming around from behind a hill on the road from the west {and reported this to King David}.

35Jonadab said to the king, "You see, what I told you is true. Your other sons are alive, and they are coming here now."

36And as soon as he said that, David's sons came in. They were all crying loudly, and David and all his officials also cried very much.

37Absalom fled {for safety} to the kingdom of Geshur, where {his grandfather} Talmai son of Ammihud was the king. King David mourned continually for his son Amnon. **38**When Absalom fled to the kingdom of Geshur, he stayed there for three years. **39**King David had intended to attack Absalom {to capture him and punish him for killing Amnon}. But by the end of those three years, David was not grieving as severely that Amnon had died, so he no longer planned to attack Absalom.

Chapter 14

[1]But Joab recognized that the king was still angry with Absalom. [2]So Joab sent someone to the city of Tekoa to bring to him a woman who was very clever. When she arrived, Joab said to her, “I want you to look very sad, as if you are grieving because someone you love has died. Put on the clothes that people wear who are mourning. Do not put any olive oil on your hair or skin. Act as if you are a woman who has been mourning for a long time for someone who has died. [3]Then go to King David and tell him what I tell you to say.” Then Joab told her what to say.

[4]So the woman who was from Tekoa went to the king. She got down and lay flat out in front of him to honor him, and then she cried out, “Your Majesty, please help me!”

[5]The king replied, “What is your problem?” She replied, “Sadly I am a widow. My husband died some time ago. [6]I had two sons. But one day they quarreled with each other while they were working out in the field. There was no one to separate them, and one of them hit the other one so hard that he killed him. [7]Now, all of my extended family has come to me and insisted that I surrender to them my son who is still alive. They want to kill him to punish him for killing his brother. But if they do that, I will not have any son to inherit my late husband’s land {and the family will take it}. My son is the only relative I have left. If they kill him, my husband will have no living descendants to preserve our family’s name.”

[8]Then the king said to the woman, “I will forbid anyone to punish your surviving son by killing him. So you may go back home {without appealing any further}.”

[9]The woman from Tekoa replied to the king, “Your Majesty, {let me reassure you that} if my son actually is guilty of murder and deserves to die, then I will accept the blame and expect Yahweh to punish me and my family. May Yahweh not punish you or the kingdom of Israel because you have said that no one should kill my surviving son.”

[10]The king said to her, “If anyone continues to demand that you surrender your surviving son for execution, bring that person to me. I will make sure that he never causes you trouble again.”

[11]Then the woman said, “Your Majesty, please swear by Yahweh your God that you will do this. That way the relative who would be responsible to kill my son if he had actually murdered his brother will not kill him and cause someone further to die in my family.” David replied, “I swear by Yahweh that I will not allow anyone to hurt your son at all.”

[12]Then the woman said, “Your Majesty, please allow me to say one more thing to you.” He replied, “Speak!”

[13]The woman said, “You have been acting badly toward God’s people. Based on the judgment you have just given, you have been doing the wrong thing. {Since you take circumstances into account when judging cases of manslaughter,} you should allow your son Absalom{, our crown prince,} to return home. [14]Consider that all of us are going to die. Like water that no one can pick up from the ground once someone has spilled it, death is permanent {so you should reconcile with Absalom while you are both still alive}. And it is not God who makes people die {even to punish them when they have done wrong things}. Instead, God forgives people who have sinned against him so that they can once more be in a good relationship with him.

[15]I came to appeal to you, Your Majesty, because I was very afraid that the members of my extended family would kill my son. I said to myself, ‘I will go and talk to the king, and maybe he will do what I ask him to do. [16]Perhaps he will listen to me and save my son from the man who is trying to kill him. If that man kills my son, I might die too {without his support}. Then we would both no longer be a part of the Israelite community.’

[17]And I decided, ‘What the king says will comfort me, because he is like an angel of God. He knows how to determine what is right and what is wrong.’ I pray that Yahweh your God will help you.”

[18]In response King David told the woman, “I am going to ask you about something, and I want you to tell me the whole truth about it.” The woman replied, “Go ahead and ask, Your Majesty{, and I will answer truthfully}.”

19 The king said, “Did Joab arrange for you to do all this?” She replied, “I swear by your life, Your Majesty, that it is
not possible to say otherwise than you have said! Yes, it was in fact Joab who told me to come here, and he was the
one who told me what to say. 20 Joab did that to try to get you to feel differently about this matter. But Your Majesty,
you seem to be as wise as one of God’s angels. You know what is happening throughout your kingdom{, and that is
how you knew that Joab sent me here}.”

21 Then King David had his servants bring Joab to him. David told Joab, “Listen! I have decided to do what you want.
So you may go and get that young man Absalom and bring him back here to Jerusalem.”

22 Joab got down and lay flat out in front of David to honor him. Then he asked God to do good things for him. Then
Joab said, “Your Majesty, now I know that you are pleased with me, since you have agreed to do what I asked.”

23 Then Joab did what David had said he could do. He went to Geshur and got Absalom and brought him back to
Jerusalem. 24 But King David had said that while Absalom could live in his own house again, he could not come and
speak with him. So Absalom lived in his own house, but he did not go and speak with the king.

25 Now people throughout Israel praised Absalom for being a very handsome man. He did not seem to have any
flaws in any part of his body. 26 Absalom wore his hair long and only cut it once a year when it became too heavy on
his head. When he cut his hair, he would weigh it, and {because it was so thick} it always weighed nearly a
kilogram. 27 Absalom had three sons. He also had a daughter, whose name was Tamar. She was a very beautiful
woman.

28 Even though Absalom had lived in Jerusalem for two entire years, David had still not allowed him to come and
speak with him. 29 So Absalom sent a messenger to ask Joab to come and speak with him. Absalom wanted to ask
Joab to help him receive permission to speak with King David. But Joab refused to come and speak with Absalom.
So Absalom sent another messenger to ask Joab to come and speak with him. But Joab still would not come.

30 Then Absalom told his servants, “Here is what I want you to do. Joab owns a piece of land next to my land, and he
has barley growing there. Go over and start a fire there to burn up the barley.” So Absalom’s servants went over
and started a fire, and it burned up all the barley.

31 Joab {realized who must have started the fire, so he} went to Absalom’s house and demanded to know, “Why did
your servants burn up the barley that was growing on my piece of land?” 32 Absalom replied, “I had them do that
because when I sent messengers to ask you to come and speak with me, you refused. I wanted you to go to the
king and tell him on my behalf that it seemed useless for me to have come here from Geshur and that I thought it
would have been better for me to stay there. Now please get the king to allow me to come and speak with him. Tell
him that if he is keeping me away to punish me for doing something wrong, he can go ahead and execute me!”
33 So Joab went to the king and told him what Absalom had said. Then the king sent messengers to bring Absalom
to the royal court. Absalom came to the king and, to honor him, he knelt down in front of him with his face
touching the ground. Then the king {indicated that Absalom could get up, and he} kissed Absalom on the cheek to
show that he was no longer hostile to him.

Chapter 15

1 Soon afterwards, Absalom got a chariot and horses to pull it. He hired 50 men to run in front of him while he was
riding around Jerusalem in the chariot. 2 And Absalom would also go and stand by the city gate starting early each
morning. When a person came toward the gate so they could go into the city and ask the king to decide a case for
him, Absalom would call out to him. He would ask what city he was from. Then the person would tell him what {city
and} tribe he was from. 3 Then Absalom would {ask the person about his case} and tell him, “It certainly seems to
me that you deserve to win your case. But the king {is not able to decide everyone’s case, and he} has not
appointed anyone else to judge cases for people like you.” 4 Absalom would then add, “I should really be a judge for
all the Israelites. That way anyone who had a legal case could come to me, and I would decide it fairly.”

5And whenever anyone approached Absalom and started to bow respectfully in front of him, Absalom would reach out and hold him up and kiss him on the cheek. **6**Absalom acted this way toward every Israelite who came to King David to ask him to judge a case. As a result, the Israelites began to wish that Absalom were their king instead of David.

7After four years, Absalom went to King David and said, “I made a promise to Yahweh. Please allow me to go to the city of Hebron so that I can do what I promised. **8**I ask this because when I was living in Geshur, in Aram, I promised Yahweh that if he made it possible for me to return to Jerusalem, then I would worship him in Hebron {and thank him publicly}.”

9The king replied, “You have my permission to go.” So Absalom went to Hebron.

10But while he was there, he secretly sent messengers throughout the territory of all the tribes of Israel. The messengers told people, “When you hear the sound of people blowing rams’ horns, shout, ‘Absalom has become the king at Hebron!’” **11**There were 200 men who came from Jerusalem to Hebron with Absalom. But they came because he had invited them to the feast he was going to host there. They were not part of his conspiracy. They knew nothing about what he was planning to do. **12**King David had an advisor whose name was Ahithophel the Gilohite. While Absalom was offering sacrifices at Hebron, he sent messengers to bring Ahithophel from his home in the city of Giloh. Many other people also came and joined Absalom {in his rebellion against David}.

13Then someone came to David and warned him, “The Israelites now want Absalom to be their king!”

14So David told all the officials in his royal court, “We must leave immediately if we want to escape from Absalom! We must go quickly, before he and his men arrive. If we do not do that, they will kill us and everyone else in the city!”

15The king’s officials replied, “Very well, your Majesty, we are ready to do whatever you wish.”

16So King David quickly left Jerusalem. His family and officials went with him. But David left ten of his secondary wives at the palace to take care of it. **17**Many of the people of Jerusalem also left the city with King David. They stopped at the edge of the city {to organize an orderly retreat}. **18**David stepped out of the roadway so that his officials could walk past him. He also let his elite corps of bodyguards go in front of him {to lead the way}. The 600 men who had been David’s soldiers when he fled to the city of Gath also walked by in front of him.

19Then David said to Ittai{, a military commander who had come} from Gath {to serve David}, “You do not need to come with us. You may safely return to Jerusalem and serve whoever is the king. After all, you are not an Israelite, and this is not your own country{, so people will consider you to be impartial}. **20**You have lived here in Israel for only a short time. And we do not even know where we will be going. So it is not right for me to make you come with us now and wander around with us. Please return to your country and take your troops with you. May people treat you kindly and be loyal to you.”

21But Ittai replied, “Your Majesty, I swear by Yahweh and I swear by your own life that I will go wherever you go. I will fight to defend you even if I have to die doing that.”

22David replied to Ittai, “Very well, please come with us!” So Ittai and all his troops and their families went with David.

23All the people who lived along the road cried loudly when they saw King David and the people with him walking by. {Since Absalom would be coming from the southwest,} the king and the others crossed the Kidron Valley and then went up the hill on the road that goes through the desolate area {east of Jerusalem}.

24Zadok the high priest had also left the city. He had brought the sacred chest of God. Some Levites were with him, and they were carrying it. But they {did not carry it across the Kidron Valley right away. Instead, they} set it on the ground. Abiathar, the other high priest, went up {the Mount of Olives on the other side of the valley and stood

there}until all of the people fleeing from Jerusalem had gone by{, and then he came back down to where the sacred chest was}.

25 Then the king told Zadok, “I want you to take the sacred chest back into Jerusalem. If Yahweh chooses to be kind
to me, someday he will allow me to return and see the sacred chest in the place where he is especially present.
26 But if he says that he is not pleased with me, then I am willing for him to do to me whatever he thinks is right.”

27 He also told Zadok, “Now listen to what I want you to do. Go back to the city peacefully. Take your son Ahimaaz
with you. Abiathar should also take his son Jonathan, and you should both go back. 28 This will be the plan. I will
wait in the wilderness at the place where people can walk across the Jordan River until you send a message to me
{telling me what I should do}.” 29 So Zadok and Abiathar carried the sacred chest back to Jerusalem, and they
remained in the city.

30 Then David walked up the Mount of Olives. He was crying as he walked. To show that he was very sad, he covered
his head {with part of his cloak}. He also took off his sandals. All the people who were walking with him also
covered their heads, and they too cried while they walked. 31 Then someone told David that Ahithophel had joined
the Israelites who were rebelling against David and supporting Absalom as their king. So David prayed, “Yahweh,
please make Ahithophel give Absalom bad advice!”

32 When they arrived at the top of the hill, where there was a place where people worshiped God, David
unexpectedly met Hushai the Archite. To show that he was very sad, Hushai had torn his clothes and put dirt on his
head. 33 David said to him, “If you come with me, you will make us travel more slowly. 34 But if you return to the city,
you can help me by telling Absalom, ‘Your Majesty, I will be your advisor. In the past, I was your father’s advisor. But
just as I advised him then, so I will advise you now.’ If you do that, you will be able to help me by countering any
good advice that Ahithophel gives to Absalom. 35 Zadok and Abiathar the priests are already there. Whatever you
hear people say in the king’s palace, tell it to Zadok and Abiathar. 36 Keep in mind that Zadok’s son Ahimaaz and
Abiathar’s son Jonathan are there. Whatever any of you find out, send them to report it to me.”

37 So David’s friend Hushai returned to the city. He arrived just as Absalom was entering Jerusalem.

Chapter 16

1 When David and the others had gone a little way past the top of the hill, he unexpectedly met Mephibosheth’s
servant Ziba. He had two donkeys with him that were carrying 200 loaves of bread, 100 bunches of raisins, 100
bunches of fresh figs, and a leather bag full of wine.

2 The king said to Ziba, “What is all this for?” Ziba replied, “The donkeys are for your family to ride on. The bread and
the fruit are for your soldiers to eat. And the wine is for anyone to drink who becomes tired in this desolate area.”

3 The king said, “Where is Mephibosheth, the grandson of your former master Saul?” Ziba answered, “You should
know that he has remained in Jerusalem, because he thinks that now the Israelites will allow him to rule their
kingdom as his grandfather Saul did.”

4 The king said to Ziba, “In that case, everything that belonged to Mephibosheth is now yours.” Ziba replied, “Your
Majesty, I will humbly serve you. I hope that you will always be pleased with me.”

5 When King David and those with him arrived at the city of Bahurim, a man whose name was Shimei unexpectedly
came out of his house to meet him. Shimei’s father was Gera. They were members of the same clan that Saul’s
family belonged to. Shimei kept cursing David as he approached. 6 Then he threw stones at David and his officials.
David’s soldiers and bodyguards surrounded David {to try to protect him from the stones}. 7 Shimei cursed David
and said to him, “Go away and never come back, you murderer, you scoundrel! 8 Yahweh is punishing you for killing
so many people who were Saul’s relatives and supporters. You took Saul’s place as king, and now Yahweh is making
your son Absalom take your place as king. You are getting what you deserve for killing so many people!”

9Then Abishai said to the king, “Your Majesty, this man is as worthless as a dead dog! You should not allow him to curse you! Permit me to go over there and cut off his head!”

10But the king replied, “I do not agree at all with what you two sons of Zeruiah want to do. If he is cursing me because Yahweh told him to curse me, then no one should challenge him for doing that.”

11Then David said to Abishai and to all his officials, “You know that my very own son is trying to kill me. So it is not surprising that this man from the tribe of Benjamin also wants me to die. Just ignore him and let him curse me if Yahweh has told him to do that. **12**Perhaps Yahweh will see how much trouble I am having and decide to make good things happen to me instead of the curses that this man is shouting at me today.” **13**So David and those who were with him continued walking along the road. Shimei walked along the hillside next to the road, and as he walked along next to them, he kept cursing David and throwing stones and dirt at him. **14**King David and the people who were traveling with him were very tired by the time they got to the place where people can walk across the Jordan River. But they were able to get a good rest there.

15While that was happening, Absalom and all the Israelites who were supporting him had arrived in Jerusalem. Ahithophel had also arrived there. **16**Then David’s friend Hushai came to Absalom and said, “May you, the king, live a long time!”

17Absalom said to Hushai, “You have been a loyal friend of my father David for a long time. So I do not understand why you did not leave Jerusalem with him.”

18Hushai replied, “Yahweh has chosen you to be the king. So have all these people here, and so have all the other Israelites. So I will now be loyal to you and stay here in Jerusalem with you. **19**Besides, it makes sense for me to serve you. After all, you are his son. Just as I served in your father’s royal court, in the same way, I will serve in your royal court.”

20Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, “What would you advise that we should do?”

21Ahithophel replied, “Your father left some of his secondary wives in the palace to take care of it. I advise you to have sexual relations with them. When people throughout Israel hear that you have done that, they will realize that you will never be able to reconcile with your father. Then all of the Israelites who are supporting you will fight hard to make sure that you defeat him.” **22**So they set up a tent for Absalom on the roof of the palace. Then Absalom had sexual relations in the tent with each of his father’s secondary wives, one at a time. The Israelites in Jerusalem could see Absalom’s officials bringing each secondary wife into the tent, and they could see Absalom going into the tent afterwards to have sexual relations with each one.

23In those days, people did what Ahithophel recommended just as if God himself had recommended it. That was how David had regarded what Ahithophel recommended, and Absalom regarded it in that same way.

Chapter 17

1Then Ahithophel said to Absalom, “Please allow me to pick 12,000 of our best soldiers so that I can lead them tonight to chase David. **2**When we catch up to him, he will be tired from traveling and physically weak. When our soldiers appear, this will terrify him. The other people who are with him will run away {and not fight against us}. We will only need to kill the king. **3**After that, the others who left Jerusalem with him will return to the city and accept you as their king. If we just kill the man you want to catch, that will be enough to get all the others to come back. It will not be necessary to hurt anyone else.” **4**Absalom and all the Israelite leaders who were with him thought that it would be good to do what Ahithophel had recommended.

5But then Absalom said, “Ask Hushai to come and speak to us as well. We should find out whether he recommends anything different that we should consider.” **6**When Hushai arrived, Absalom told him what Ahithophel had

suggested. Then he asked Hushai, “What do you think we should do? If you do not think that we should do what Ahithophel advises, then tell us what you think we should do instead.”

7Hushai replied, “This time, what Ahithophel has suggested is not good advice.” **8**He continued, “You know that your father and the men who are with him are elite soldiers. You know that they must be very angry, like a wild mother bear whose cubs someone has stolen from her. Furthermore, your father has fought in many battles{, so he knows what he should do now}. He will not spend the night with the crowd of people who left Jerusalem with him. **9**Right now he is probably already hiding in a cave or in some other safe place. If Ahithophel leads soldiers out to attack David’s soldiers, David’s soldiers will certainly kill some of them at the start of the battle. When people hear about that, they will say, ‘David’s soldiers are slaughtering Absalom’s soldiers!’ **10**Then your other soldiers, even if they are as fierce as lions, will become very afraid. After all, everyone in Israel knows that your father is a great soldier and that the soldiers who are with him are very brave.

11So this is what I recommend. You should really summon the entire Israelite army. Have the solders come here even if they live as far away as Dan {in the far north} or Beersheba {in the far south}. You will have too many soldiers to count, like the grains of sand on the seashore. {Wait until they come, and then} you yourself should lead the army into battle. **12**We will find your father, wherever he is, and our great army will overwhelm his smaller army, just as dew covers the entire ground. Neither he nor any of the soldiers who are with him will survive. **13**If he decides to retreat into some city, all our soldiers will bring ropes to that city and pull it down into the valley below. As a result, not one stone will remain on top of the hill where that city was!”

14Absalom and the other Israelite leaders who were with him decided, “What Hushai suggests is better than what Ahithophel suggested.” Yahweh led them not to accept Ahithophel’s advice, which actually would have been better for Absalom. As a result, Yahweh caused a great defeat for Absalom.

15Then Hushai {went secretly and} told the two priests, Zadok and Abiathar, what both he and Ahithophel had suggested to Absalom and the Israelite leaders. **16**Then he said to them, “{There is still a risk that Absalom might decide to do what Ahithophel suggested, so} send a message quickly to David. Tell him not to stay overnight at the place where people can walk across the Jordan River. Instead, he and his soldiers must cross the Jordan River immediately. Otherwise, Absalom and his army may come and kill them.”

17The priests’ two sons, Jonathan and Ahimaaz, were staying near En Rogel{, outside Jerusalem}. They did not dare to enter the city{, because if someone saw them, he would report it to Absalom}. Instead, they had arranged for a woman who served the two priests to come and report to them what was happening. They would then go and report it to King David. **18**But a young man saw them at En Rogel, and he went and reported this to Absalom. {They knew the young man had recognized them,} so both of them left quickly and went to the house of a man who lived in the city of Bahurim. That man had a well in his courtyard, and he let Jonathan and Ahimaaz go down into the well to hide. **19**The man’s wife took a cloth and covered the opening of the well. Then she scattered grain on top of it {to make it look as if this was the place where she dried the grain in the sun}. As a result, it was not evident that there was a well beneath the cloth.

20Some of Absalom’s soldiers learned in what direction the two men had gone. So they went {in that direction} and came to the house {where they were hiding}. They asked the wife, “Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?” She replied, “They went across that stream over there.” So the soldiers went in that direction and searched for them. But they could not find them, so they went back to Jerusalem.

21After the soldiers had gone, the two men came out of the well and went and reported to King David. They told him, “Ahithophel has encouraged Absalom to attack you immediately. So you must get all these people across the Jordan River quickly!” **22**So David and all his soldiers quickly started to cross the Jordan River, and by the next morning they had all crossed to the other side.

23When Ahithophel realized that Absalom was not going to do what he had recommended, {he knew that David would defeat Absalom, so} he put a saddle on his donkey and returned home to his own city. He gave to his family instructions about what to do with his possessions, and then he hanged himself {because he knew that otherwise David would kill him as a traitor}. People buried his body in the same tomb where people had buried his father.

24David and his soldiers arrived at Mahanaim. At the same time, Absalom and all his soldiers also crossed the Jordan River. **25**Now Absalom had appointed Amasa to be the commander of his army instead of Joab. Amasa was the son of an Israelite man whose name was Ithra. Amasa's mother was Abigail. She was the daughter of Nahash and the sister of Joab's mother Zeruiah. **26**Absalom and his Israelite soldiers set up their military camp in the region of Gilead.

27When David and his soldiers arrived at Mahanaim, Shobi son of Nahash from the Ammonite city of Rabbah, Machir son of Ammiel from the city of Lo Debar, and Barzillai from the city of Rogelim in Gilead came to them. **28**They brought mats for them to sleep on and bowls and clay pots that they could use to prepare and serve food. They also brought wheat and barley, as raw grains, as flour, and as roasted grains. They also brought beans and lentils, some raw and some roasted. **29**They also brought honey, curds, sheep, and cow's cheese. They knew that David and his soldiers would need to have these things to eat because they would be hungry and thirsty and tired from marching through a desolate area.

Chapter 18

1David organized his soldiers for the battle. He counted them and then appointed someone to lead each group of a hundred soldiers. He then appointed someone to lead each group of one thousand soldiers {that contained ten groups of a hundred soldiers}. **2**David then sent the soldiers out in three divisions. Joab commanded one division, Joab's brother Abishai commanded a second division, and Ittai from Gath commanded the third division. Before they left, David told the soldiers, "I will go with you personally into the battle."

3But his soldiers said, "No, we will not permit you to come into the battle with us. Even if they defeat us so that we all run away, they will not care about us. Or even if they kill half of us, they will not care about that either. There are ten thousand soldiers like us{, but only one king like you}. So it would be better for you to stay here inside the city of Mahanaim. You can receive reports of the battle and send soldiers to where we need them, and you can keep the city secure as a place to which we can retreat if we need to."

4The king replied to them, "Very well, I will do whatever seems best to you." So he stood beside the city gate and observed while his soldiers marched out in their groups of hundreds and thousands.

5As they were leaving, the king ordered Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, "For my sake, do not harm that young man Absalom!" All the soldiers heard David give this order about Absalom to his three main commanders.

6So David's soldiers went out to fight against the Israelite soldiers who were supporting Absalom. They fought a battle in the Forest of Ephraim. **7**David's soldiers won the battle there against Absalom's soldiers. They badly defeated them that day. They killed 20,000 of them. **8**The battle broke up into small skirmishes all over that area. The number of Absalom's soldiers who died that day because of accidents in the forest was greater than the number of them whom David's soldiers killed in the battle.

9In the forest, Absalom suddenly noticed that some of David's soldiers were near him. Absalom was riding on the mule {that the Israelite king rode}. {To get away from David's soldiers, he made the mule run away, and} the mule ran under the thick branches of a large oak tree. Absalom's head got caught in the branches. The mule he was riding kept going, and that left Absalom dangling in the air.

10One of David's soldiers saw what happened. He went and told Joab, "Listen, I saw Absalom hanging in an oak tree!"

11Joab said to the man, "Listen, when you saw him hanging there, you should have killed him immediately! If you had killed him, I would have rewarded you with ten pieces of silver and a soldier's belt!"

12The man replied to Joab, "Even if you gave me a thousand pieces of silver, I would not do anything to harm the king's son. I say this because we all heard the king command you and Abishai and Ittai, 'For my sake, keep any soldier from hurting that young man Absalom!' **13**If I had killed Absalom, I would have put my own life in danger.

{The king would have heard about it, since} the king hears about everything. You would not have protected me by saying I was obeying your orders{, and the king would have executed me}."

14Joab said, "I am not going to stay here and speak with you any longer!" Then he got three spears and went to where Absalom was. Absalom was still alive, dangling from the branches of the oak tree. Joab thrust the spears into Absalom's chest. **15**Then ten young men who carried Joab's weapons gathered around Absalom, and they stabbed him repeatedly to finish killing him.

16Then Joab blew on his ram's horn to signal to his soldiers that they should stop fighting. So his soldiers stopped chasing Absalom's soldiers and came back {to their camp}. **17**They took Absalom's body and threw it into a huge pit in the forest. They covered it with a huge pile of stones. Meanwhile, all the remaining Israelite soldiers who had been supporting Absalom ran away back to their own homes.

18(Absalom had no sons to preserve his family name {because his sons had died while they were still young}. So while Absalom was alive, he had built a monument in the Valley of Kings {near Jerusalem}. He thought that if he did that, people would remember him. He named the monument after himself, and people still call it Absalom's Monument.)

19Ahimaaz son of Zadok said to Joab, "Allow me to run to King David and tell him the good news. I want to do this because Yahweh has shown that he wants David to remain as king, because he enabled his soldiers to defeat his enemies!"

20But Joab said to him, "No, I will not allow you to run and tell this news to the king today. Some other day you may do that, but not today. I do not want you to bring to the king the news that his son is dead."

21Then Joab said to the man from Ethiopia who ran carrying messages for him, "You go and tell the king what you have seen." So that man bowed respectfully to Joab {to show that he would obey} and started to run.

22Then Ahimaaz said again to Joab, "However the king might respond to the news, even though your servant from Ethiopia has already left, please allow me to run too." Joab replied, "My boy, you should not want to do that! You will not receive any reward for your news!"

23But Ahimaaz replied, "However the king might respond to the news, I want to go." So Joab said, "Very well, then, go." Ahimaaz ran on the flat ground through which the Jordan River flows and arrived where David was before the man from Ethiopia did {because he had run through hills and forests}.

24David was sitting in the area between the inner and outer gate in the city wall. A watchman went up on top of the city wall and stood on the roof over the gates. As he was looking around, he suddenly noticed a lone runner. **25**The watchman called down and reported this to King David. David said, "If he is alone, that indicates that he is coming to tell us news." The man who was running continued to come closer.

26Then the watchman saw another man running. So he called down to those below, "I see another man running alone!" And King David said, "He is also coming to tell us some news."

27The watchman said, "The first man seems to be Ahimaaz son of Zadok. He is running the way Ahimaaz runs." The king said, "He must be coming to tell us good news, because Joab would not have sent someone like him to tell us bad news."

28When Ahimaaz got close enough, he called out to King David, "All is well!" When he arrived, he knelt down in front of him with his face on the ground to show respect. Then he said, "Your Majesty, praise Yahweh your God, who made your soldiers defeat the men who were rebelling against you!"

29King David asked, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Ahimaaz {did not want to answer that question, so he} replied, "When Joab sent the man from Ethiopia and me to bring news to you, I saw that there was a lot of confusion, but I do not know what it was about."

30So the king said, “Stand over there and wait.” So Ahimaaz stepped aside and stood nearby.

31Then the man from Ethiopia arrived. He said, “Your Majesty, I have some good news to share with you. Here it is. Today Yahweh has shown that he wants you to remain as king, because he has enabled your soldiers to defeat the enemies who rebelled against you!”

32The king said to him, “Is the young man Absalom safe?” The man from Ethiopia replied, “Sir, I wish that what happened to him would happen to all of your enemies and to anyone who violently rebels against you!”

33{Realizing that he meant that Absalom was dead,} David became extremely distressed. He went up to the room above the gateway and cried. As he was going up, he kept crying out, “O, my son Absalom! O, my dear son Absalom, I wish that I had died instead of you, Absalom, my dear son!”

Chapter 19

1Someone told Joab that the king was crying because he was so sad that Absalom had died. **2**All of David’s soldiers heard that he was unhappy that their army had killed Absalom. So even though they had won the battle against Absalom’s soldiers, they could not celebrate that day. **3**The soldiers came back into the city quietly that day, the way soldiers do so that no one will find out that they have run away from a battle. **4**The king covered his face {with part of his cloak}, and he kept crying loudly, “O, my son Absalom! Absalom, my dear son!”

5Joab went to the house where the king was and told him, “Today your soldiers saved your life and the lives of your sons and daughters and wives and secondary wives. But you are making them feel shame for what they did! **6**You seem to love those who hate you and hate those who love you! It is as if you have said that you do not care about your own commanders and your soldiers. I can see that if Absalom were still alive and all of us were dead today, you would like that better. **7**So now you must go out and thank your soldiers for what they did. I swear by Yahweh that if you do not do that, they will all have abandoned you by tomorrow morning. Then you will be in more trouble than you have already had in your entire life!”

8So the king went and sat at the city gate. People told the soldiers, “Look, the king is sitting at the gate!” So the soldiers came and gathered around him{, and he thanked them}. Meanwhile, all the remaining Israelite soldiers who had been supporting Absalom had run away back to their own homes.

9Then people throughout the territory of Israel began to argue with each other about what they should do. Some of them said, “King David led our armies to defeat the Philistines and the other enemies who were oppressing us. But then he left Israel in order to escape from Absalom! **10**We appointed Absalom to be our king, but he died in the battle against David’s soldiers. So we should do something to bring King David back!”

11{King David learned what the people were saying,} so he sent the two priests, Zadok and Abiathar, to say to the leaders of Judah, “The king says that he has heard that the Israelite people want him to be king again. He says that you should not be the last ones to bring him back to his palace. **12**He says that you are his relatives. You and he have the same ancestor. So you should not be the last ones to bring him back!” **13**He also told them to say to Amasa, “You are one of my relatives. I swear that I am going to make you my army commander from now on instead of Joab. If I do not do that, then may God not make me the king again.”

14After David sent that message to them, the people of Judah agreed that he should be their king again. So they sent him a message that said, “We would like you and all your officials to come back.” **15**So King David and his officials started back toward Jerusalem. When they arrived at {the eastern shore of} Jordan River, the leaders of the tribe of Judah met them. They had come to Gilgal {on the western shore} to escort the king and his officials across the river.

16Shimei son of Gera, that man from the tribe of Benjamin who lived in Bahurim, hurried to the river with the leaders of Judah to meet King David. **17**There were 1,000 men from the tribe of Benjamin who came with him. Ziba,

the servant of Saul, also hurried to the Jordan River. He brought his 15 sons and 20 servants with him. Shimei and Ziba quickly waded across the river to meet King David {on the eastern shore}. **18**The elders of Judah then crossed the river at the place where people could walk across it so that they could escort King David and his officials back to the other side. They wanted to do whatever the king wanted. Shimei came and bowed down in front of David.

19He said to the king, “Your Majesty, please forgive me for the terrible thing that I did on the day that you left Jerusalem. I hope that you will not punish me for it, and I hope that you will not continue to feel hostile toward me. **20**I acknowledge that I have sinned against you. But please consider that I have been first one from the northern tribes to come here today to welcome you back, Your Majesty.”

21But Abishai son of Zeruiah, told David, “Shimei cursed you, the man whom Yahweh appointed to be the king of Israel! So you should not forgive him. You should execute him for doing that!”

22But David said, “I do not agree at all with what you two sons of Zeruiah want me to do. You are encouraging me to do something now that would not be good for me. I am not going to execute anyone in Israel today. I know confidently that the Israelites want me to be their king{, so I do not need to execute this man to make my reign more secure}.” **23**Then King David told Shimei, “I promise that I will not execute you,” and he swore an oath that he would not execute him.

24Mephibosheth, Saul’s grandson, also came to the Jordan River to welcome King David back. {To show his grief,} Mephibosheth had not cut his toenails or trimmed his mustache or washed his clothes from the time that the king left Jerusalem up to the time when he returned safely. **25**When he arrived from Jerusalem to welcome King David, he said to him, “Mephibosheth, why did you not go with me?”

26He replied, “Your Majesty, {when I heard that you were leaving Jerusalem,} I told my servant Ziba, ‘Saddle my donkey so that I can ride on it and go with the king.’ But he deceived me {and left without me. I could not follow him,} because I am crippled. **27**He lied to you about me. But your Majesty, you are as wise as one of God’s angels. So do whatever seems right to you. **28**I consider that all of my grandfather’s family expected that you would execute us. But instead, you allowed me to eat my meals with your household! So I certainly do not have the right to ask you for anything further.”

29King David replied, “You do not need to say anything more. I have decided that you and Ziba will equally divide the land {that belonged to your grandfather Saul}.”

30Mephibosheth replied to the king, “Your Majesty, Ziba may have all of the land. All that matters to me is that you have returned safely.”

31Barzillai the Gileadite had come down to the Jordan River from his home in Rogelim to escort the king across the river. **32**By this time Barzillai was elderly. He was 80 years old. But he was such a wealthy man that he had been able to provide all of the food that the king and his soldiers needed while they were at Mahanaim. **33**The king said to Barzillai, “Come across the Jordan River with me to Jerusalem, and I will take care of you there.”

34But Barzillai replied, “I do not have many more years to live. So there is no reason for me to go with you to Jerusalem. **35**I am now 80 years old. I do not know what is enjoyable and what is not enjoyable. I cannot enjoy what I eat and what I drink. I cannot hear anymore the voices of men and women as they sing. You would have to make difficult arrangements for me. I do not want you to have to do that. **36**I will cross the Jordan River with you and walk a short distance with you toward Jerusalem. But you do not need to entertain me there in your royal court. **37**Instead, please allow me to return to my home. That is where I want to die, near my parents’ grave {so people can bury me there}. But here is my son Chimham. Your Majesty, please allow him to go with you and serve you, and do for him whatever seems right to you.”

38The king replied, “Very well, Chimham may cross the river with me, and I will do for him whatever seems good to you. And I will also do for you whatever you want me to do.”

39 Then the leaders of Judah and the people who had been with David honored him by leading the way across the
Jordan River. David followed them across. He kissed Barzillai {on the cheek to show his affection and gratitude} and
asked God to do good things for him. Then Barzillai returned to his home.

40 But Chimham stayed with King David as he continued on to Gilgal. Now the leaders of the tribe of Judah had
escorted David across the Jordan River. But only some of the leaders of the other tribes arrived in time to do that
with them{, since the leaders of Judah did not wait for them}.

41 Then, when the rest of the Israelite leaders arrived, they complained to David, “It was not fair for our fellow
Israelites, those leaders from the tribe of Judah, to take you away from us! We all wanted to escort you and your
family and your soldiers across the Jordan River. But they did that without waiting for us!”

42 The leaders from Judah told the leaders of the other tribes, “We escorted the king because he is from our tribe of
Judah. You should not be angry about this. The king never paid for our food, and he never gave us any gifts.”

43 The men of the other Israelite tribes replied, “We represent ten of the tribes that the Israelite king rules, and you
represent only one. So you should not have treated us with disrespect {by bringing the king back across the Jordan
River without us}. We were the first ones to talk about bringing David back to Jerusalem to be our king again.” But
the leaders of Judah angrily disagreed with the leaders of the other tribes of Israel.

Chapter 20

1 There was a man there at Gilgal whose name was Sheba. He was the son of Bichri. He was a man who often
caused trouble. He came from the tribe of Benjamin. He blew a ram’s horn and called out, “David, that son of Jesse,
does not belong to us at all! So, my fellow Israelites, let us return to our homes!”

2 Then the leaders of the Israelite tribes decided not to escort David back to Jerusalem. Instead, they did what
Sheba had said {and returned to their homes}. But the leaders of the tribe of Judah remained with David. They still
wanted him to be their king. So they escorted him from near the Jordan River back to the city of Jerusalem.

3 When David arrived at the palace in Jerusalem, he took the ten secondary wives whom he had left there to take
care of the palace and put them in another residence where someone guarded them. David provided what they
needed, but he never had sexual relations with them again. It was as if they were widows, even though their
husband was still alive. They had to stay in that residence until they died.

4 Then King David told Amasa, “Summon the soldiers of the tribe of Judah to come here by the day after tomorrow.
You must be here also{, ready to lead them into battle}.” 5 So Amasa went to summon the Judean soldiers. But he
did not return within the time that David had specified.

6 Then David told Abishai, “{If we do not capture him quickly,} Sheba son of Bichri will hurt us even more than
Absalom did. So I want you to take the soldiers who are already here with me and go to capture him. If you do not
do that, we will no longer know where he is going. That would allow him and his soldiers to go into cities that have
walls {and then it would be difficult to defeat them}.” 7 So Abishai led those soldiers out of Jerusalem to pursue
Sheba. They included Joab’s personal guard, the king’s elite bodyguards, and the men who had been David’s army
when he was in Gath.

8 When they arrived at the large rock that is in the region of Gibeah, Amasa met them{, leading a large army of
Judean soldiers}. Joab was wearing armor for battle, and he had fastened a {short} sword in its sheath to his belt.
He approached Amasa, and as he did, he made the sword fall out of its sheath into his hand.

9 Joab said to Amasa, “Hello, cousin! Are you doing well?” Then Joab grabbed Amasa’s beard with his right hand so
that he could kiss him {on the cheek as a friendly greeting}. 10 Amasa did not think that Joab would hurt him with
the sword he was holding in his hand. But Joab thrust it into Amasa’s belly, and his insides spilled out onto the

ground. Amasa eventually died from this wound. Joab did not stab him again. Then Joab and his brother Abishai {and the soldiers they were leading} left and continued to pursue Sheba.

11One of the young men who carried Joab's weapons stayed next to Amasa's body. He called out {to the Judean soldiers}, "Everyone who wants Joab to be our commander and who wants David to be our king, go with Joab {to capture Sheba}!" **12**Amasa {had fallen onto the road, and} he was rocking back and forth and bleeding severely {as he lay slowly dying}. Joab's soldier saw that the Judean soldiers were all stopping when they came to where Amasa was. So he dragged him off the road into a field and threw a cloth over him. **13**After that soldier took Amasa's body off the road, the other soldiers continued on and went with Joab to pursue Sheba.

14Sheba fled north through the whole length of the territory of Israel and finally came to the city of Abel Beth Maacah. The soldiers of the Berites had formed their army and had also come north with Sheba as their commander. **15**Joab and the soldiers he was commanding {found out that Sheba had gone there, so they} went there and surrounded the city. They built a dirt ramp up against the outer wall of the city. Then they started battering the wall to try to make it collapse. **16**But a wise woman who lived in that city {stood on the top of the wall and} shouted, "Listen to me! Please ask Joab to come here, because I want to talk to him!" **17**So {they told Joab and} he came there, and the woman asked, "Are you Joab?" He replied, "Yes, I am." She said to him, "Please listen to what I say." He replied, "I am listening."

18She said, "For a long time people have said, 'When people have problems, they ought to ask the people who live in the city of Abel what they should do.' By getting good advice here, they have solved their problems. **19**We who live in this city are peaceful and loyal Israelites. But you are trying to destroy our city. Many towns and villages in this area depend on us. You should not be trying to destroy a community that belongs to Yahweh!"

20Joab replied, "I certainly do not want to destroy your city at all! **21**That is not what we want to do. But Sheba son of Bichri, a man from the hilly area where the people of the tribe of Ephraim live, is rebelling against King David. If you surrender only him to us, then we will go away from this city." The woman replied to Joab, "We agree. We will cut off his head and throw it over the wall to you."

22Then this woman went to the leaders of the city and told them what she had said to Joab. {They agreed, and} they cut off Sheba's head and threw it over the wall to Joab. Then Joab blew his ram's horn {to signal that his soldiers should stop fighting}. They left that city and returned to their homes. Joab returned to Jerusalem and told King David what had happened.

23{After David became king again,} Joab was the commander of the entire Israelite army. Benaiah son of Jehoiada was the commander of David's elite corps of bodyguards. **24**Adoniram supervised the men whom the king forced to work for him. Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the man who reported to the people everything that David decided. **25**Sheva was the official secretary. Zadok and Abiathar were the priests. **26**And Ira from the city of Jair was David's advisor.

Chapter 21

1During the time when David ruled, there was a famine in Israel continously for three years. David asked Yahweh why this was happening. Yahweh told him, "{There is a famine to show that} you need to punish Saul's family because Saul killed so many people from the Gibeonite group."

2So the king asked the leaders of Gibeon to come and speak with him. (The people of Gibeon were not Israelites. They were instead an Amorite people group that had survived {when the Israelites invaded the land of Canaan and killed the rest of the Amorites}. The Israelites had solemnly promised that they would not kill them. But Saul had tried to kill all of them because he eagerly wanted the people of Israel and Judah to be the only ones living in that land. **3**David said to the Gibeonite leaders, "What can I do to make up for what Saul did to your people so that you would then ask Yahweh to do good things for us Israelites again?"

4They replied, “You cannot make up for what Saul did to us by having his family pay us any amount of money. And we do not have the right to kill any Israelites.” So David asked, “So what are you asking me to do for you?”

5They replied, “That man Saul wanted to destroy us so that none of us would live anywhere in Israel. And he killed many of us. **6**Give us seven of Saul’s descendants {and allow us to execute them}. We will {kill them and} hang up their bodies in public so that Yahweh can see that we have punished Saul’s family for what he did. We will do this in the city of Gibeah where Saul lived. Yahweh chose him to be the king of Israel {and he should have protected us}.” The king replied, “Very well, I will give them to you {so that you can execute them}.”

7The king did not give Saul’s grandson Mephibosheth to them. He was Jonathan’s son, and David and Jonathan had made a solemn promise that they would never harm each other’s descendants. They had sworn by Yahweh that they would keep that promise. **8**Instead, he took two sons whom Rizpah daughter of Aiah, had borne to Saul {as his secondary wife}. Their names were Armoni and Mephibosheth. David also took five of the sons of Merab, Saul’s daughter. Merab’s husband was Adriel son of Barzillai. He was from the city of Meholah. **9**David gave these men to the people of Gibeon {to execute}. They took those seven men to Gibeon and killed them and hanged their bodies up on the hill in that city. That was where people worshiped Yahweh and considered him to be present. The Gibeonites killed those seven men at the same time. Those men died at the beginning of the time of year when people harvest their grain, beginning with barley.

10Then Rizpah took some rough cloth and hung it from a rock {near the bodies} so she could sit under it and have shade from the sun. She stayed there from the time that people started to harvest barley until the autumn rains began. She did not allow any birds to come near the corpses during the day, and she did not allow any wild animals to come near them during the night. **11**Someone told David what Rizpah daughter of Aiah, Saul’s secondary wife, had done. **12**So he went {with some of his servants} to Jabesh Gilead, where the leaders of that city allowed him to take the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan. The soldiers from that city had gone stealthily at night and taken their bones from the plaza in the city of Beth Shan. That was where Philistine soldiers had hung them on the day when they had killed Saul {and Jonathan} on Mount Gilboa. **13**David {and his servants} took the bones of Saul and Jonathan. Some other servants also took the bones of the seven men whom the Gibeonites had hanged.

14David’s servants went to the tomb of Saul’s father Kish, in the city of Zela in the land of the tribe of Benjamin. There they buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan {and the bones of the men whom the Gibeonites had hanged}. In this way, they did all that the king had commanded them to do. After the Gibeonites punished Saul’s family for what he had done, God answered the Israelites’ prayers for their land {and caused the famine to end}.

15Later the Philistine army began to fight again against the army of Israel. David went with his soldiers to fight them. During the battle, David became tired. **16**One of the Philistine soldiers in the battle was a man whose name was Ishbi Benob. He was a giant as his ancestors had been. He carried a bronze spear that weighed almost three and a half kilograms. He also had a dangerous weapon. It seemed to him that he was going to be able to kill David. **17**But Abishai son of Zeruiah came to help David. He attacked the giant and killed him. Then David’s soldiers made David promise that he would not go with them into a battle again. They said that if enemy soldiers killed him in battle, Israel would no longer have him as king to guide them.

18Later, the Israelite soldiers fought another battle with the Philistines. This happened near Gob. During the battle, Sibbecai, from the clan of Hushah, killed Saph, who was a giant as his ancestors had been.

19Later, the Israelite soldiers fought another battle with the Philistines near Gob. During that battle, Elhanan son of Jaare Oregim from Bethlehem killed Goliath from Gath. Goliath had a great spear whose shaft was very thick, like the bar on a weaver’s loom.

20Later, there was another battle near Gath. One of the Philistine soldiers was very tall. He had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot. He was a giant as his ancestors had been. **21**He challenged any Israelite soldier to fight him in single combat. David’s older brother Shimeah had a son whose name was Jonathan. Jonathan accepted the challenge, fought this Philistine soldier, and killed him.

22 Those four men lived in Gath and were giants as their ancestors had been. David and his soldiers fought them
and killed them.

Chapter 22

1 After Yahweh had rescued David from Saul and his other enemies, David sang a song to Yahweh. 2 This is what he
sang: "Yahweh, you are like a huge rock or fortress {where I can go to be safe}. I can be confident that you will
rescue me when I am in trouble. 3 Yahweh, you protect me. I am as safe as I would be if I were hiding on top of a
cliff. It is as if you are a shield that defends me. You are the powerful God who saves me. You are like a high place
where I find refuge. You save me from those who act violently toward me. 4 You deserve for people to praise you,
Yahweh. When I cry to you {for help}, you rescue me from my enemies. 5 {Someone was trying to kill me, and} I was
in such danger of dying that it was as if a huge wave was crashing over me. His wicked plans against me were like
floodwaters that were carrying me away, and this made me very afraid. 6 I did not think I could escape going to the
place where dead people go. It was as if that place had wrapped ropes around me and was pulling me down into it.
It was as if the only direction I could walk was right into a trap where I would surely die. 7 But when I was very
distressed, I cried out to you, Yahweh my God. From your temple in heaven you could hear me calling, and you
listened to my prayer. 8 It made you so angry {that someone was trying to kill me, and you responded so
powerfully,} that it was as if there was a great earthquake. It seemed as if the sky itself was shaking. 9 {Your power
was so great that} it was as if there was a volcano from which smoke was rising, a stream of fire was flowing out
that burned up everything in its path, and hot coals were flying into the air that started fires where they landed.
10 {Your power was so great} when you came {to help me that} it was as if there was a great thunderstorm, with
only a little sky visible below the low-hanging dark clouds. 11 {You came very fast to help me, as if} you were riding
on a creature that had wings. It was as if the strong winds {of a thunderstorm} were a bird that you were riding.
12 It was as if you had made the darkness of the storm a safe place for you to stay. Yes, it was as if you had a
temporary shelter within the clouds that were full of water. 13 It was as if it became bright where you were within
the clouds, and then lightning bolts came from there. 14 It was as if there was a loud sound of thunder in the sky
because you, Yahweh, the God who is greater than all other gods, had spoken {to announce that you were coming
to rescue me}. 15 It was as if you sent flashes of lightning that made my enemies so afraid that they ran away in
different directions, as if you had shot arrows at them. 16 Then it was as if you shouted at my enemies {to tell them
to stop trying to kill me}. It was as if you blew away all the water that was covering the bottom of the ocean and all
the ground that was over the deepest part of the earth. 17 It was as if you reached down from heaven and grabbed
me so that you could pull me up out of the deep water of the ocean. 18 There was a powerful man who wanted to
harm me, and there were people who hated me. They were too strong for me to defeat, but you rescued me from
them. 19 They attacked me, and they would have destroyed me, but you, Yahweh, protected me. 20 You brought me
to a place where I was safe. You love me, and so you rescued me. 21 Yahweh, you did good things for me because I
did what was right. I did not harm my enemies, so you made sure that they did not harm me. 22 Yahweh, I have
lived as you want people to live. I have not stopped obeying you, my God, and done wicked things instead. 23 I have
remained aware of what you have said people should do, and I have continued to obey all your laws. 24 I have not
done anything for which you would blame me. I have been careful not to do anything for which you would punish
me. 25 You have done good things for me because I did what is right. You recognize that I am innocent. 26 When
people are loyal to you, you act loyally toward them. When people are careful to do good things for others, you do
good things for them. 27 You allow sincere people to recognize how sincere you are. But when people try to trick
others, you show that you are much more clever than they are. 28 You rescue people whom others are afflicting.
You are aware of people who are arrogant, and you humiliate them. 29 Yahweh, you are like a lamp that shines light
so that I can see even when it is dark. 30 With your help I have caught and defeated a band of raiders. With your
help I have captured a city that had walls around it, as if I had leaped over those walls. 31 My God, everything that
you do is perfect. Everything that you say is right. You protect everyone who depends on you, as if you are a shield
that defends them. 32 Yahweh, you are the only real God. Only you are like a huge rock {where I can go to be safe}.
33 My God, you are like a very secure place where I can go to hide from danger. You make sure that nothing

prevents me from doing what you want me to do. [34]You enable me to walk about safely in the mountains, as a deer does, without falling. [35]You teach me how to fight in a battle. You give me the strength to bend {and string} a bronze bow. [36]You have saved me by protecting me like a shield, and by answering my prayers, you have enabled me to defeat my enemies. [37]You have given me many ways to respond to each situation. As a result, I have been able to carry out my plans successfully. [38]I chased my enemies and defeated them. I did not stop fighting them until I had killed them all. [39]I defeated them so completely that they had no army left. The ones who fell to the ground never got up, because they died of their wounds. [40]You have given me the strength and courage to fight battles. When people revolted against me, you enabled me to subdue them. [41]You enabled me to defeat my enemies and step in triumph on their necks. You gave me power over those who hated me so that I was able to destroy them. [42]They looked for someone to rescue them, but no one did. They cried out {for help} to you, Yahweh, but you did not help them. [43]I defeated them so completely that they were no longer any threat to me, no more than tiny particles of dust would be. It was as if I had flattened them smoothly on the ground like the mud on the streets. [44]You rescued me from the Israelites who tried to rebel against me. You preserved me as the ruler of many nations. Foreign people are now my subjects. [45]Foreign rulers fearfully bow down in front of me {to show their submission}. When they heard about what Yahweh enabled me to do, they obeyed me. [46]I defeat foreign armies that resist me so that they become weak, like a plant that dries up in the sun. They surrender and come out of their cities with walls shaking with weakness and fear. [47]Yahweh, you are the only real God! I praise you! You are like a huge rock {where I can go to be safe}! You are the powerful God who rescues me. Everyone should exalt you. [48]You are the God who enables me to conquer enemies who have attacked me. You cause the people of other nations to be subject to my rule. [49]You kept my enemies from capturing me. People rebelled against me, but it as if their armies had been floodwaters and you lifted me out of them to safety. You rescued me from men who tried to harm me. [50]Because of all this, I thank you, Yahweh, so that all people groups will know that you are the one who has helped me. I sing to praise you for what you have done that has made you famous. [51]You chose me to be king, and you have done great things to save me from my enemies. You faithfully show kindness to me, David, whom you anointed as king, and you will always show kindness faithfully to my descendants."

Chapter 23

[1]David son of Jesse was a man whom God caused to become great. The God whom the descendants of Jacob worship chose him to be the king of Israel. David wrote beautiful songs for the people of Israel. This is the last song that he wrote. [2]"The Spirit of Yahweh used me to say what he wanted to say. The message that I spoke came from him. [3]The God whom we Israelite people worship has spoken. The one who protects us Israelites said to me, 'Kings who rule fairly over people have great respect for me. [4]They are like the light that appears at dawn when the sun rises on a cloudless morning. The sunshine causes grass to sprout after the rain ends. [5]And that is how God will surely bless my family, since he made a covenant with me that will last forever. He prepared that covenant carefully and guaranteed it. He will certainly act to help me and make the things happen that I truly want. [6]But God will remove all the people who disrespect him, just as people throw away thorns that hurt their hands when they try to pick them up. [7]Someone who wants to get rid of thornbushes does not grab them. Instead, he uses an iron shovel or a wooden stick to dig them out. Then he burns them right there."

[8]Here is a description of David's greatest warriors. Three of them were the very greatest. Their leader was Josheb Basshebeth the Tahchemonite. He once fought and killed 800 enemy soldiers in a single battle.

[9]The next of David's very greatest warriors was Eleazar son of Dodo, son of Ahohi. The Philistine army invaded Israel, and the Israelite army came to fight them. The {Philistines were winning the battle, so the} other Israelite soldiers retreated. [10]but Eleazar fought even harder against the Philistine soldiers until he had almost no strength left. He had held his sword so hard for so long that his hand cramped and he could not let go of his sword. Yahweh won a great victory for the Israelites on that day. The other Israelite soldiers only came back to the battlefield to take the armor from the Philistines whom Eleazar had killed.

11The next of David's very greatest warriors was Shammah son of Agee the Hararite. Once the Philistine army
invaded Israel and came to the city of Lehi, where there was a field of ripe lentils {that they wanted to steal}. The
other Israelite soldiers ran away from the Philistine troops. **12**But Shammah stood in the middle of the field. He
fought and killed Philistine soldiers {so that they could not steal the lentils}. And so Yahweh won a great victory for
the Israelites.

13At the time when David was staying in the cave of Adullam, three other men who were among his 30 greatest
warriors came to help him. It was summer. A group of Philistine soldiers had set up their tents in the Valley of the
Raphaites. **14**David was staying in the cave {because it was safe there}, and another group of Philistine soldiers was
occupying {his home town of} Bethlehem. **15**One day David felt very thirsty. He said, "If only someone would bring
me some water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem!" **16**So these three of his greatest warriors fought their
way through the camp of Philistine soldiers at Bethlehem. They drew some water from the well there and carried it
back to David. But he refused to drink it. Instead, he poured it out on the ground {as an offering} to Yahweh. **17**He
said, "Yahweh, it would certainly not be right for me to drink this water! That would be like drinking the blood of
these men who were willing to die to get it for me!" So he refused to drink it. That was one of the things that those
three of his greatest warriors did.

18Abishai son of Zeruiah, Joab's younger brother, was the leader of those three of David's greatest soldiers. He once
fought against 300 enemy soldiers and killed them all. As a result, he became famous like the three very greatest
soldiers. **19**He was the most famous of those three of David's greatest soldiers, and he became their leader,
although the three very greatest warriors were even more famous.

20Benaiah son of Jehoiada from the city of Kabzeel was another of David's greatest soldiers. He won many great
victories. He killed two of the best warriors in the Moabite army in single combat. He also went down into a pit on a
snowy day and killed a lion there. **21**He also killed a huge Egyptian soldier. That soldier had a spear as a weapon.
Benaiah had only a thick wooden rod. But he attacked the soldier and pulled the spear out of his hand. Then he
killed him with his own spear. **22**Those are some of the things that Benaiah son of Jehoiada did. As a result, he
became famous as one of those three of David's greatest warriors. **23**He was more famous than David's other thirty
greatest warriors, although the three very greatest warriors were even more famous. David appointed him to be
the commander of his bodyguards. **24**These are the names of David's greatest warriors: Asahel the brother of Joab;
Elhanan son of Dodo from Bethlehem; **25**Shammah the Harodite; Elika the Harodite; **26**Helez the Paltite; Ira son of
Ikkesh the Tekoite; **27**Abiezer the Anathothite; Mebunnai the Hushathite; **28**Zalmon the Ahohite; Maharai the
Netophathite; **29**Heleb son of Baanah the Netophathite; Ithai son of Ribai from Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin;
30Benaiah the Pirathonite; Hiddai from the place where streams flow through Gaash; **31**Abi Albon the Arbathite;
Azmaveth the Barhumite; **32**Eliahba the Shaalbonite; Jonathan son of Jashen; **33**Shammah the Hararite; Ahiam son
of Sharar the Hararite; **34**Eliphelet son of Ahasbai son of the Maacathite; Eliam son of Ahithophel the Gilonite;
35Hezro the Carmelite; Paarai the Arbite; **36**Igal son of Nathan from Zobah; Bani the Gadite; **37**Zelek the Ammonite;
Naharai the Beerothite, who carried the weapons of Joab son of Zeruiah; **38**Ira the Ithrite; Gareb the Ithrite; **39**and
Uriah the Hittite. Altogether, these were 37 of David's greatest warriors.

Chapter 24

1Yahweh was angry with the Israelite people again, and he led David to do something that caused trouble for
them. David caused that trouble by saying, "Find out how many soldiers Israel and Judah have."

2King David said to Joab, the commander of his regular army, "I want you to go with your officers through the
territories of all the tribes of Israel, from Dan {in the far north} to Beersheba {in the far south}, and count the men
who can fight as soldiers. That way I will know how many Israelite men we have who can fight as soldiers in the
army."

3But Joab replied to the king, “Your Majesty, I hope that Yahweh our God will give us Israelites a hundred times more soldiers than we have now. I hope that you will see this happen {in your own lifetime}. But I do not think it is a good idea to count how many soldiers we have.”

4But King David insisted that Joab do as he had said, and he ordered the commanders of the army to do it. So they left his court and went out to count the Israelite men who could fight in war.

5They crossed the Jordan River and set up their tents south of Aroer, in the middle of the valley. From there they went through the territory of the tribe of Gad, and from there they went {north} to Jazer. **6**Then they went {north} to Gilead and to the area of Tahtim Hodshi. Then they went to Dan Jaan {in the far north of Israel}, and then they went {farther west} to Sidon. **7**Then they went south to Tyre, a city that had high walls around it, and also to all the cities where some Hivites and Canaanites still lived. Then they went to Beersheba, in the desolate area in the southern part of the territory of Judah.

8It took them nine months and 20 days to finish going throughout the land {and counting the people}. After that, they returned to Jerusalem.

9They reported to King David the number of men that they had counted. There were 800,000 men in Israel and 500,000 men in Judah who were fit to serve as soldiers in the army.

10But after David’s officers had counted the fighting men of Israel, David felt very badly that he had told them to do that. He confessed to Yahweh, “When I ordered them to do that, I committed a very serious sin. Please forgive me. But now, Yahweh, I admit that what I did was very foolish.”

11When David got up the next morning, Yahweh gave a message to the prophet Gad. He was a man who helped David know what God wanted him to do. Gad said to David, **12**“Go and tell David that I say he must choose one of three punishments that I will describe. I will punish him with the one that he chooses.”

13So Gad went to David and told him that Yahweh had said he would need to choose one of three punishments. He then told David, “You can choose for there to be seven years of famine in Israel. You can choose for your enemies to keep defeating you so badly over the course of three months that your army keeps running away from them. Or you can choose for there to be a plague here in Israel for three days. I will go back and tell Yahweh your answer. So think carefully about what you will choose.”

14David said to Gad, “All those are very terrible things for me to choose between! But let Yahweh be the one to punish me {with a plague}, since he is very merciful. Do not let humans be the ones to punish me.”

15So Yahweh sent a plague on the Israelite people. It started that morning and continued for three days. Throughout the territory of Israel there were 70,000 Israelites who died because of the plague. **16**Then the angel who had killed all those people lifted his hand toward the city of Jerusalem in order to cause a plague that would kill many of the people who lived there. But Yahweh grieved about punishing any more people, and said to the angel “Put your hand back down {and do not cause a plague in Jerusalem}!” When Yahweh said that, his angel was standing near the place where Araunah the Jebusite threshed grain.

17When David saw the angel who was causing the people to become sick and die, he spoke to Yahweh. He said, “Truly, I am the one who has committed the sin. I have done a very wicked thing, but these people are as innocent as sheep. They have certainly not done anything that is wrong. So you should punish me and my family, not these people!”

18That day Gad came to David and told him, “Go to the place where Araunah the Jebusite threshes grain and build an altar to worship Yahweh there.” **19**So David did what Gad told him to do, which was what Yahweh had commanded, and he went there. **20**When Araunah looked down and saw the king and his officials coming toward him, he came out of his house and lay down on the ground in front of the king {to honor him}, with his face touching the ground.

21Araunah said, “Your Majesty, may I ask why you have come to me?” David replied, “I have come to buy this
ground where you thresh grain. That way I can build an altar here to Yahweh{and offer sacrifices on it} so that he
will stop the plague that has been killing so many Israelites.”

22Araunah replied to David, “Your Majesty, please offer to Yahweh whatever you wish. You may take the oxen that
you see here and use them for an offering that you burn completely on the altar. And you may take their yokes and
the boards that I use for the threshing, which you also see here, and you may use them for the wood that you will
burn. **23**Your Majesty, I, Araunah, hereby give all these things to you.” Then he said, “I hope that Yahweh your God
will accept your offering and grant your request.”

24But the king said to Araunah, “No, I will not accept these things as a gift. I will pay you for them. I will not take
things that have cost me nothing and burn them completely on an altar as offerings to Yahweh.” So David paid 50
shekels of silver to Araunah for the oxen and the ground.

25Then David built an altar there to Yahweh. He burned the oxen completely on the altar as an offering. He also
offered fellowship sacrifices. Then Yahweh answered David’s prayers for the people of his land, and he ended the
plague that had been killing so many Israelites.

Ezra

Chapter 1

1During the first year after Cyrus, king of Persia, {conquered the kingdom of Babylon,} Yahweh motivated Cyrus to write a message. Yahweh did this in order to fulfill a prophecy that Jeremiah had spoken. Cyrus sent messengers throughout his empire with copies of the message and he ordered them to proclaim it as they went. This is what they proclaimed:

2"I, King Cyrus, rule the Persian Empire, and I say this: Yahweh, the God who is in heaven, has made me ruler over the great kingdoms of this part of the world. Now he has assigned me to {make sure that his people} build a temple for him in {the city of} Jerusalem in {the province of} Judah. **3**All you people who belong to God may go up to Jerusalem in Judah to rebuild this temple for Yahweh. He is the God who is in Jerusalem, the God whom the people of Israel worship. And may God give you success! **4**There are other people who are living around the Israelites in the places where the Israelites have been living since their ancestors were exiled here. Those people must contribute silver and gold to the Israelites who go. They must also give to the Israelites animals and {any} supplies {that they might need}. They should also give them other gifts that they can use to help build the temple of God in Jerusalem."

5Then God motivated some of the priests and Levites and {some of} the clan leaders from {the tribes of} Judah and Benjamin to return to Jerusalem. Those whom God motivated got ready to return to Jerusalem and build the temple for him there. **6**Many of their neighbors helped them by giving them silver and golden things, animals, and supplies for the journey. They also gave them other valuable gifts, and they gave them money to buy things for building the temple. **7**King Cyrus also commanded {his servants} to bring out the valuable things that King Nebuchadnezzar{'s soldiers} had taken from the temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem and had put in the temples of their gods {in Babylon}. **8**{Specifically,} King Cyrus of Persia commanded Mithredath, his treasurer, {to command his servants} to bring out all of these items and to give each one of them to Sheshbazzar, the leader of {the group that was going to return to} Judah. **9**This is a list of the items {that Cyrus donated}: 30 gold basins, 1,000 silver basins, 29 knives, **10**30 gold bowls, 410 secondary silver bowls, and 1,000 other utensils. **11**All together, Cyrus gave 5, 400 silver and gold items to Sheshbazzar to take with him when he and the others returned from {the kingdom of} Babylon to Jerusalem.

Chapter 2

1{Many years ago, the army of} King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had captured many Israelite people and taken them away to the kingdom of Babylon. Now, these Israelite people began to return to Judah. Some returned to Jerusalem, and some returned to other places in Judah. Each of them went to the towns where their ancestors had lived. This is a list of the groups who returned. **2**The leaders of those people who returned were Zerubbabel, Joshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah.

The groups of people who returned to Judah are listed next.

32, 172 descendants of Parosh,

4372 descendants of Shephatiah,

5775 descendants of Arach,

62, 812 descendants of Pahath-Moab, from the families of Jeshua and Joab,

71, 254 descendants of Elam,

8945 descendants of Zattu,

9760 descendants of Zaccai,

10642 descendants of Bani,

11623 descendants of Bebai,

121, 222 descendants of Azgad,

13666 descendants of Adonikam,

142, 056 descendants of Bigvai,

15454 descendants of Adin,

1698 descendants of Ater, who descended from Hezekiah,

17323 descendants of Bezai,

18112 descendants of Jorah,

19223 descendants of Hashum,

2095 descendants of Gibbar.

21{The following is a list of people whose ancestors had lived in these towns in Judah:}

123 from Bethlehem,

2256 from Netophah,

23128 from Anathoth,

2442 from Azmaveth,

25743 from Kiriath Arim, Kephirah, and Beeroth,

26621 from Ramah and Geba,

27122 from Michmas,

28223 from Bethel and Ai,

2952 from Nebo,

30156 from Magbish,

311, 254 from the other Elam,

32320 from Harim,

33725 from Lod, Hadid, and Ono,

34345 from Jericho,

353, 630 from Senaah.

36These are the priests who returned:

973 descendants of Jedaiah (that is, those who descended through Jeshua),

371, 052 descendants of Immer,

381, 247 descendants of Pashur,

391, 017 descendants of Harim,

40These are the descendants of Levi who returned:

74 descendants of Jeshua and Kadmiel, who were from the family of Hodaviah,

41128 musicians who were descendants of Asaph,

42139 gatekeepers who were descendants of the gatekeepers Shallum, Ater, Talmon, Akkub, Hatita, and Shobai,

43The following is a list of the temple workers who returned. They were the descendants of these men: Ziha, Hasupha, Tabbaoth, **44**Keros, Siaha, Padon, **45**Lebanah, Hagabah, Akkub, **46**Hagab, Shalmai, Hanan, **47**Giddel, Gahar, Reaiah, **48**Rezin, Nekoda, Gazzam, **49**Uzza, Paseah, Besai, **50**Asnah, Meunim, Nephusim, **51**Bakbuk, Hakupha, Harhur, **52**Bazluth, Mehida, Harsha, **53**Barkos, Sisera, Temah, **54**Neziah, and Hatipha.

55The following descendants of King Solomon's servants returned {to Jerusalem}. They were the descendants of these men: Sotai, Hassophereth, Peruda, **56**Jaalah, Darkon, Giddel, **57**Shephatiah, Hattil, Pochereth Hazzebaim, and Ami. **58**Altogether, there were 392 descendants of temple workers and Solomon's servants who returned.

59There was another group that returned {to Judah} from {the towns of} Tel Melah, Tel Harsha, Cerub, Addon, and Immer {in Babylonia}. But they could not prove that they were genuine Israelites. **60**This group included 652 people who were descendants of Delaiah, Tobiah, and Nekoda. **61**The descendants of the priests in this group included people belonging to Habaiah's clan, Hakkoz's clan, and Barzillai's clan. Barzillai had married a woman who was a descendant of Barzillai from the region of Gilead. He had taken the name of his father-in-law's clan for himself. **62**The people in this group searched in the documents that listed the names {of the descendants} from the {various Israelite} clans, but they did not find {their names there}. So the officials did not permit them to do the work that priests did. **63**The governor told these men that they could not eat the shares of the sacrifices that only the priests could eat until a {high} priest could consult Yahweh by using the sacred lots {to determine that they truly were descendants of priestly families. Only if the high priest determined that these men truly were priests could they eat the most sacred food}.

64Altogether in this group, 42, 360 Israelite people returned to Judah. **65**The Israelites also brought along with them 7, 337 male and female servants and 200 male and female musicians. **66**The Israelites also brought with them {from Babylonia} 736 horses, 245 mules, **67**435 camels, and 6, 720 donkeys.

68When they arrived at {the ruins of} the temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem, some of the clan leaders gave money for the supplies needed to rebuild the temple in the same place where the old temple had been. **69**Each one gave as much as he was able to give for the work {on the temple}. Altogether, they gave 61,000 gold coins, 5,000 silver bars, and 100 robes for the priests.

70So all of these priests, Levites, musicians, gatekeepers, temple servants, and other people returned to live in the towns and villages {of the province of Judah}. They settled in the places where their ancestors had lived.

Chapter 3

1After the Israelite people {returned and} began to live in their towns, in the autumn of that year, they all gathered together in Jerusalem. **2**Then Joshua son of Jehozadak and his fellow priests and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and his associates all began to rebuild the altar of the God of Israel. They did that so that they could sacrifice burnt offerings on it. They wanted to follow what the prophet Moses had written in the laws that God had given to him. **3**Even though they were afraid of the people who were already living in that area, they rebuilt the altar at the same place where the previous altar had been. They began to offer sacrifices to Yahweh on it every morning and every evening. **4**{Fifteen days after they started to offer these sacrifices,} the people celebrated the Festival of Shelters. {Moses had commanded them to do this in the decrees that God had given to him.} Each day the priests offered the sacrifices that were required for that day. **5**From then on, they presented the regular burnt offerings and the {other required} offerings{. These were} for the New Moon festivals and the other festivals that they celebrated as special times each year to honor Yahweh. They also brought other offerings to Yahweh just because they wanted to{, not because they were required to bring them}. **6**But even though they started bringing burnt offerings to Yahweh at the beginning of autumn, they had not yet started rebuilding the temple. **7**So the {leaders of the} Israelites hired stone-cutters and carpenters {to do the construction work}. They also bought logs of cedar trees from the people of {the cities of} Tyre and Sidon. To pay for the logs, the Israelites sent grain, wine, and olive oil to those people. Since King Cyrus had said that the Israelites could buy these things, the people of Tyre and Sidon {agreed. They} brought the logs down from the mountains in Lebanon {to the Mediterranean seacoast} and then floated them along the coast to {the city of} Joppa. {Then they brought the logs inland from Joppa up to Jerusalem.}

8The Israelites started to rebuild the temple in the second month of the second year after they had returned to Jerusalem. Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, Joshua the son of Jozadak, their fellow leaders the priests and the Levites, and all the people who had come from where their enemies had taken them to Jerusalem supported this project. The leaders assigned the Levites who were twenty years old and older to supervise this work of rebuilding the temple for Yahweh. **9**Jeshua, his sons, and his other relatives, and Kadmiel and his sons together helped to supervise those who were doing the work on the temple. They were all descendants of Judah. The sons and grandsons of Henadad along with the rest of their fellow Levites {joined in the work}. **10**When the builders finished laying the foundation of the temple of Yahweh, the priests and the Levites did what King David had told Asaph and the other musicians to do {many years previously} in order to praise Yahweh. The priests put on their robes and stood in their places, blowing their trumpets. Then the Levites who were descendants of Asaph clashed their cymbals. **11**Then the Levites praised Yahweh and thanked him by singing this song about him:

“He is very good to us!

He will continue to be faithful and kind to us Israelites {and he will love us} forever.” Then all the people shouted loudly. They praised Yahweh because they had finished laying the foundation of his temple. **12**Many of the old priests, Levites, and leaders of families remembered seeing the first temple. They cried aloud when they saw the workers lay the foundation of this temple {because they thought that this temple would not be as big or as beautiful as the first temple}. But the other people shouted joyfully in loud voices. **13**Since the shouting was so loud, no one could tell the difference between the people who were shouting joyfully and the people who were crying sorrowfully. All the noise was so loud that even people far away could hear it.

Chapter 4

1The enemies of {the people of the tribes of} Judah and Benjamin learned that the Israelites who had returned from Babylon were rebuilding the temple for Yahweh, the God whom the people of Israel worship. **2**So they approached Zerubbabel the governor and the other clan leaders and {deceptively} said to them, “We want to help you to build the temple. After all, we also worship your God. We have been offering sacrifices to him since the time that Esarhaddon, the king of Assyria, brought us here.”

3But Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the other Jewish clan leaders replied, “We will not allow you to help us build a temple for our God. No, we alone will build it for Yahweh, the God whom Israel worships, because that is what King Cyrus of Persia told us to do.”

4Then the people who had been living in that land {before the Israelites returned there} started doing things to make the Jews discouraged and afraid to continue building {the temple}. **5**They bribed government officials to prevent the Jews from fulfilling their plans {to rebuild the temple and the city}. They did that all during the time that Cyrus was king of Persia, and continued to do it during {the time of the kings after him, including} the time when Darius was king of Persia.

6These enemies of the Jews continued to accuse them during the time that {Darius’ son} Ahasuerus was king. When Ahasuerus became king, they wrote a letter to him in which they accused the people living in the province of Judah and the city of Jerusalem {of planning to rebel against the government}.

7Then again during the time of Artaxerxes, {who was the next} king of Persia, the enemies of the Jews wrote a letter to him. Some men named Bishlam, Mithredath, and Tabeel were the leaders of this group. They had someone write the letter for them in the Aramaic language, using the Aramaic alphabet.

8Rehum, the high commissioner, and Shimshai, the provincial secretary, agreed that they could write the letter to King Artaxerxes {with their authority} to protest about what was happening in Jerusalem. This is what they wrote:

9From Rehum the high commissioner, Shimshai the provincial secretary, and others with us who are judges and other government officials{. We represent the people} from {the areas of} Persia, Erech, Babylon, and Susa in the district of Elam, **10**as well as the other people groups whom the great and glorious Ashurbanipal had deported and sent to live in cities in Samaria and in the rest of the province west of the {Euphrates} River. Therefore: **11**(This is what they wrote in the letter that they sent to him:)

This letter is for King Artaxerxes. It comes from the officials serving you who live in the province west of the Euphrates River. Therefore:

12“Your Majesty, we want you to know that the Jews who left from your territories are now living near us. They are rebuilding the city of Jerusalem. These people are wicked and want to rebel against you. Therefore, they are now rebuilding the walls {of that city} and repairing the foundations {of its buildings}. **13**It is important for you to know that if they rebuild this city and finish building its walls, they will stop paying any taxes. As a result, there will be less money in your treasury.

14So, because we are loyal to you, and because we do not want anyone to humiliate you, for these reasons we are sending this information to you. **15**We suggest that you {order your officials to} search among the records that your predecessors kept. {If you do that,} you will find out that the people in this city have always rebelled against their rulers. You will find out that these people have withheld taxes from kings and from rulers of provinces. You will find out that from long ago the leaders of this city have started rebellions. That is the reason why {the Babylonian army} destroyed this city. **16**We want you to know that if they rebuild this city and finish building its walls, then you will no longer be able to control {any of the people in} this province west of the {Euphrates} River.”

17{After} the king {read this letter, he} sent this reply to them:

“To you, Rehum, the high commissioner, and Shimshai, the provincial secretary, and your colleagues in Samaria and in other parts of the province that is west of the {Euphrates} River, I send my greetings. Therefore:

18My officials carefully read out loud to me the letter that you sent to us. **19**Then I ordered my officials to search {the records}. I have found out that {what you said is true.} The people of Jerusalem have repeatedly revolted against their rulers, beginning a long time ago. **20**{In the past,} powerful kings ruled in Jerusalem. They also ruled over the whole province west of the {Euphrates} River. They forced the people there to pay them all kinds of taxes.

21Therefore, you must command those Jews to stop rebuilding the city. They will only be allowed to resume if I tell them that they may rebuild it. **22**Do this immediately, because I do not want those people to do anything more that will cause me to lose {any territory or income}."

23Then King Artaxerxes sent {messengers with} a copy of the letter to Rehum and Shimshai the provincial secretary and their colleagues. As soon as the messengers finished reading it out loud to them, Rehum and Shimshai and their colleagues went quickly to the Jews in Jerusalem, and they forced the Jews to stop rebuilding {the city}.
24{Because the enemies of the Jews kept opposing them so strongly in these ways,} the Jews had stopped rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem. They did not do any more work to rebuild the temple until the second year after Darius had become the king of Persia.

Chapter 5

1At that time two prophets were giving messages from God to the Jews living in Jerusalem and in other cities in Judah{, saying that they should continue rebuilding the temple}. Those prophets were Haggai and Zechariah, the son of Iddo. They spoke their messages representing the God whom the people of Israel worshiped, the one who ruled them. **2**So Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Joshua son of Jozadak led many other people to start rebuilding the temple of God in Jerusalem again. God's prophets Haggai and Zechariah were with them and helping them.

3But then Tattenai, the governor of the province west of the Euphrates River, and Shethar-Bozenai went to Jerusalem together with some of their officials and said to the people, "Who has permitted you to do all this work to rebuild this temple?" **4**They also asked the Jews to tell them the names of the men who were working on this temple.

5However, God was taking care of the Jewish leaders, and their enemies did not make them stop {building the temple}. Instead, the enemies sent King Darius a report and waited for him to send back a decree about it. {The decree would either allow the Jewish leaders to finish their work on the temple, or else it would command them to stop their work completely}.

6This is a copy of the report that Tattenai, governor of the province of Beyond-the-River, Shethar-Bozenai, and their associates, {who were} the officials of the province of Beyond-the-River, sent to King Darius. **7**When they sent the report to him, this is what they wrote in it:

"King Darius, we hope everything is going well for you.

8We want you to know that we went to the temple of the great God in the province of Judah. The people are building it with huge stones, and they are putting wooden beams in the walls. They are doing this work very carefully, and they are making good progress.

9So we asked the Jewish leaders, 'Who has permitted you to rebuild this temple?' **10**We also asked them for the names of their leaders so that we could write them down and so that we could inform you who their leaders were.

11This is what they told us in reply. They said, 'We serve the God who created heaven and earth. We are rebuilding his temple, which a great king of Israel originally completed many years ago. **12**But our ancestors did things that caused God, who is in heaven, to become very angry. So God allowed {the armies of} Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, a Chaldean, to conquer them. His armies destroyed that temple, and they took many of the Israelite people to Babylon.

13However, during the first year that Cyrus ruled as king of Babylon, he decreed that our people could rebuild the temple for God. **14**There had been a lot of containers made of gold and silver in the temple of God. Nebuchadnezzar took them from the temple in Jerusalem and brought them to a temple {for his god} in Babylon. Later, King Cyrus removed those containers from that temple in Babylon and gave them to a man named

Sheshbazzar, whom he appointed as governor {of Judah}. **15**King Cyrus told Sheshbazzar to take these containers and put them back in the temple in Jerusalem. He also decreed that the Jews should rebuild the temple at the place where it had been before. **16**So Sheshbazzar came here to Jerusalem and {supervised the men who} laid the foundation of this temple. And since that time, the people have been working on the temple, but they have not finished it yet.'

17Therefore, your Majesty, please order your officials to search in the place in Babylon where you keep the royal records. Have them find out whether or not it is true that King Cyrus decreed that the Jews should rebuild this temple of God in Jerusalem. Then please tell us what you would like us to do about this matter."

Chapter 6

1So King Darius commanded his servants to search in the places where he kept important records there in the kingdom of Babylon. **2**They {searched, and they} found a scroll {that contained the information that they wanted to know} in the fortress city of Ecbatana in the province of Media. This is what that scroll said:

3"During the first year that King Cyrus ruled the empire, he sent out a decree concerning the temple of God that was in Jerusalem. He said, 'I command that the Jews shall build a new temple in the same place where they had previously offered sacrifices. They must make the temple 27 meters high and 27 meters wide. **4**They must build the temple from large stones. {After putting down} three layers of stones, {the workers must put} a layer of new timber {on top of them}. I will pay for this work with money from the royal treasury. **5**I also give back {to the Jews} the gold and silver containers that had belonged to the temple of God but that Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon. The Jews must take these and return them to the temple in Jerusalem. The Jews must put each one back in its original place in the temple of God.'"

6{After learning this from the scroll, King Darius had a scribe write that information in a letter that he sent to the leaders of the enemies of the Jews in Jerusalem. He also included this message:} "This is a message for you, Tattenai, the governor of {the province} west of the {Euphrates} River, for you, Shethar-Bozenai, and for all of your associates, who are the officials of that province: Stay away from there! **7**Allow them to continue the work of rebuilding that temple of God. Allow the governor of the Jews and their elders to lead their people in building this new temple on the same site as the former temple. **8**Furthermore, I command you to help these leaders of the Jews {in the following ways} as they rebuild this temple of God. You must be sure to give these men funds so that they can continue the building work. Take the money from my treasury, from the tribute you collect in {the province} west of the {Euphrates} River. **9**The priests in Jerusalem need animals to sacrifice as burnt offerings to the God who is in heaven. This may include young bulls or rams or lambs. They may also need wheat, salt, wine, and olive oil {to go with those sacrifices}. Make sure that you diligently give them whatever they demand of those things every day. **10**When you do that, they will be able to offer sacrifices that please the God who is in heaven, and they will be able to pray that God will bless me and my sons.

11This is what I command about anyone who disobeys this decree. My soldiers will pull a beam from his house {and sharpen one end of it}. Then they will bury the other end of the beam in the ground so that it stands upright. Then they will pick that person up and ram his body onto the {sharpened} beam. Then they will completely destroy that person's house until only a pile of rubble is left, because he disobeyed me. **12**God himself has chosen that city of Jerusalem as the place where people will honor him. May he get rid of any king or any nation that tries to change this decree or destroy that temple in Jerusalem! I, Darius, make this decree. You must completely obey it."

13Tattenai, the governor of the province west of the Euphrates River, and Shethar-Bozenai and their associates {read the message from King Darius and} immediately obeyed what the message from King Darius commanded them to do. **14**So the Jewish leaders continued to progress in their work of rebuilding {the temple}. The messages that the prophets Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo preached encouraged them greatly. The people worked until they completed {the temple}, just as their God had commanded them to do, and just as the Persian kings

Cyrus and Darius had decreed, and as the Persian king Artaxerxes {would decree later}. **15**The people finished building this temple on the third day of the month of Adar, during the sixth year that King Darius ruled {the kingdom of Persia}.

16Then the people of Israel, {that is,} the priests, the Levites, and everyone else who had returned from Babylonia, joyfully dedicated this temple to God. **17**During the ceremony to dedicate this temple to God, they sacrificed 100 young bulls, 200 rams, and 400 lambs. They also sacrificed 12 male goats as an offering so that God would forgive the sins of all the people, because that was how many tribes there were in Israel. **18**Then the Jewish leaders divided the priests and Levites into groups that would take turns serving in the temple of God in Jerusalem. They did this according to what Moses had written {many years previously} in the law.

19On the fourteenth day of the first month, the Jews who had returned from Babylonia celebrated the Passover Festival. **20**{To qualify themselves for offering the sacrifices,} all the priests and Levites had already purified themselves by performing the proper rituals. Then they slaughtered the lambs for the benefit of everyone who had returned from Babylonia, for the other priests, and for themselves. **21**All of the Israelite people celebrated the Passover. This included the Israelites who had returned from Babylonia and the people who had separated themselves from the people of the area around them who worshiped other gods. They separated themselves from those people and joined the Israelites so that they could worship Yahweh, the God whom the Israelite people worshiped. **22**Then for the next seven days, they joyfully celebrated the Festival of Unleavened Bread. They were joyful because Yahweh had caused the king of Assyria to be favorable to them. As a result, the king had helped them to rebuild the temple of God, the God whom Israel worshiped.

Chapter 7

1Many years later, during the time when Artaxerxes was the king of Persia, {there was a man named} Ezra{. He} was a descendant of Seraiah, who was the son of Azariah, who was the son of Hilkiah. **2**Hilkiah was the son of Shallum, who was the son of Zadok, who was a descendant of Ahitub, **3**who was a descendant of Amariah, who was the son of Azariah, who was a descendant of Meraioth, **4**who was the son of Zerahiah, who was the son of Uzzi, who was the son of Bukki, **5**who was the son of Abishua, who was the son of Phinehas, who was the son of Eleazar, who was the son of Aaron, the {first} Supreme Priest. **6**This man Ezra knew the laws of Moses very well. Those were the laws that Yahweh had given to the people who worship him, the Israelite people. {Ezra asked the king for many things and} the king gave Ezra everything that he asked for because Yahweh, the God whom Ezra worshiped, caused all of it to go well for him. Then Ezra traveled from Babylon {to Jerusalem}.

7Many Israelite people came with Ezra to Jerusalem, including some priests, some Levites, some musicians, some gatekeepers, and some {of the descendants of} men who worked in the temple. That was during the seventh year that Artaxerxes was the king of Persia. **8**Ezra {and the group with him} arrived in Jerusalem in the fifth month of the seventh year that Artaxerxes was king.

9Consider this: They started out from Babylon on the first day of the first month. They arrived safely in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month of that year. God certainly acted very kindly toward them. **10**{God made Ezra's journey successful} because Ezra had devoted himself to studying the laws of Yahweh and understanding how to obey them. He had also devoted himself to teach everything in those laws to the Israelite people.

11King Artaxerxes gave a letter to Ezra the priest and scribe who studied what Yahweh had commanded in the law that Yahweh had given to Israel. This is what the letter said:

12"This letter is from Artaxerxes, the greatest of the kings. I am giving it to Ezra the priest, who has carefully studied the law that the God who is in heaven gave {to the Israelite people}. Greetings. This is what I want you to know:

13I am commanding that any of the Israelite people in my kingdom may go with you to Jerusalem if they want to go. That includes priests and Levites.

14I, the king, and my seven advisors are sending you to investigate whether the people of Judah and Jerusalem are following the law of your God that you carry. **15**We are also telling you to take with you the silver and gold that I and my advisors will give to you. We give it freely to the God of Israel who has a temple in Jerusalem. **16**You should also take any silver and gold that {the people in} the entire province of Babylonia may give to you. Add that to the money that the Israelite people and the priests freely give for you to use at the temple of their God in Jerusalem. **17**Then carefully use this money to buy the bulls, rams, and lambs that the priests will burn on the altar of the temple of your God in Jerusalem. Also buy the grain and wine that go with these offerings.

18If there is any silver or gold left over {after you buy all of those things}, you and your companions may use it to buy whatever you think that your God wants you to buy. **19**We have also given to you some {valuable} containers for the priests to use in the temple of your God. Take all of them to your God in Jerusalem. **20**If you need to supply any other things for the temple of your God, I permit you to get the money {to pay for those things} from the royal treasury.

21And I, King Artaxerxes, personally command this to all the treasurers in the province west of the Euphrates River: Ezra is a priest who has carefully studied the laws of the God who is in heaven. If there is anything that he requests, give it to him quickly. **22**Give him up to three and one-third metric tons of silver, up to 500 bushels of wheat, up to two and one-fifth kiloliters of wine, up to the same amount of olive oil, and all the salt that he requests. **23**Be sure that you provide everything that the God who is in heaven requires for his temple. We certainly do not want this God to be angry with me or with my descendants{, who will later be kings, because I did not provide what he required}. **24**By means of this letter, I also prohibit you from collecting tax payments of any kind from any of the priests, Levites, musicians, gatekeepers, or any men who work in the temple. They are exempt from taxes {because} they serve in the temple of this God. **25**Now I will address you, Ezra. The God whom you worship has made you wise. Therefore, I want you to appoint men who can settle disputes between people and interpret God's laws for all {of the Jews} in the province west of the Euphrates River. They must do this for all of those who know the laws of this God, and all of you must teach God's laws to those who do not know them. **26**{You and the men whom you appoint} must make sure to severely punish everyone who does not obey my law or the law of the God whom you worship. You may decide whether to execute them or to send them out of the country or to take away all of their property or to put them in prison."

27{When I, Ezra, read this letter, I said,} "Praise Yahweh, the God whom our ancestors worshiped! He has caused the king to want to honor his temple in Jerusalem. **28**God also acted very kindly to me by causing the king and his advisors and all of his powerful officials to want to help me. When I saw how Yahweh, the God whom I worship, was making all of my plans succeed, I boldly asked some of the Israelite leaders to go {to Jerusalem} with me."

Chapter 8

1"This is a list of the names of the clan leaders, along with the names of their clans, who traveled {to Jerusalem} with me from Babylonia when Artaxerxes was king {of Persia}:

2Gershom from the clan descended from {Aaron's grandson} Phinehas.

Daniel from the clan descended from {Aaron's son} Ithamar.

Hattush from the clan descended from {King} David. **3**{Hattush was also} a descendant of Shecaniah.

Zechariah and 150 other men from the clan descended from Parosh.

4Eliehoenai son of Zerahiah and 200 other men from the clan descended from Pahath-Moab.

5Shecaniah son of Jahaziel and 300 other men from the clan descended from {Zattu}.

6Ebed son of Jonathan and 50 other men from the clan descended from Adin.

7Jeshaiah son of Athaliah and 70 other men from the clan descended from Elam.

8Zebadiah son of Michael and 80 other men from the clan descended from Shephatiah.

9Obadiah son of Jehiel and 218 other men from the clan descended from Joab.

10Shelomith son of Josiphiah and 160 other men from the clan descended from {Bani}.

11Zechariah son of Bebai and 28 other men from the clan descended from {another man whose name was} Bebai.

12Johanan son of Hakkatan and 110 other men from the clan descended from Azgad.

13Eliphelet, Jeuel, and Shemaiah and 60 other men from the clan descended from Adonikam. They were the last three leaders from the clan descended from Adonikam {that had not returned earlier with Zerubbabel}.

14Uthai and Zaccur and 70 other men from the clan descended from Bigvai.

15{This is an account of how we traveled to Jerusalem.} I gathered together all of these Israelites at the canal that goes from Babylon to Ahava. We set up our tents and stayed there for three days. {During that time} I interviewed the people and the priests and discovered that there were no Levites among us. **16**So I summoned Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, {another man named} Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah, and Meshullam, who were all leaders of the people. I also summoned Joiarib and {a third man named} Elnathan, who were wise. **17**I sent them all to Iddo, a Levite leader who was living in a place called Kasiphia. I told them what to say to Iddo and to his fellow Levites, the {descendants of} temple workers whom he oversaw there. I wanted them to send us some men who would {go with us to} work in the temple of our God.

18Because God acted kindly toward us, they brought us a very wise man named Sherebiah and 18 of his sons and other relatives. He was a descendant of Mahli, who was a grandson of Levi, the son of Israel. **19**{They} also {sent to us} Hashabiah, along with Jeshaiah, and 20 of his brothers and their sons. Both men were descendants of Merari {the son of Levi}. **20**They also sent 220 other men to work in the temple. King David and his officials had apppointed the ancestors of these men to assist the Levites. I listed the names of all of these men.

21There alongside the Ahava Canal, I announced a time for all of us to abstain from eating food {and to pray}. {I told them that this was a time} to humble ourselves in the presence of our God and to pray that God would protect us, our children, and our possessions while we traveled. **22**Previously we had told the king that our God takes care of all those who truly trust in him, but that he powerfully punishes everyone who refuses to obey him. So I would have been ashamed to ask the king to send soldiers and men riding on horses to protect us from our enemies while we were traveling along the road. **23**So we abstained from eating food and we asked our God to protect us. We prayed to him, and he answered our prayer.

24I chose 12 of the leaders of the priests and brought them together with Sherebiah and Hashabiah and ten of the other Levites. **25**I assigned to each of them a portion of the gifts of silver and gold and the other valuable items {to transport to Jerusalem}. These were the items that the king and his advisors and other officials, and the Israelite people who were living in Babylonia, had contributed for the temple of our God. **26**As I gave these various items to those men, I weighed each of the items. This was the total: about 21 and one half metric tons of silver, items made from silver that altogether weighed three and one third metric tons, three and one third metric tons of gold, **27**20 gold bowls that altogether weighed about eight and one-half kilograms, and two items made of beautiful polished bronze that were as valuable as ones made of gold. **28**I said to those priests and Levites, 'I have set you apart from the others to serve Yahweh in a special way. The people have also set apart these valuable things for only him. The people also gave the silver and the gold voluntarily as an offering to Yahweh, the God whom our ancestors worshiped. **29**So guard them carefully. When we arrive in Jerusalem, weigh them out where the leading priests and

Levites and the other leaders of the Israelite clans can see them. {They will then put them} in the storerooms in the temple of Yahweh.’

30So these priests and Levites said that they would be responsible to transport all of the {gifts of} silver and gold and other valuable items to the temple of our God in Jerusalem.

31On the twelfth day of the first month, we left the Ahava Canal and started to travel to Jerusalem. Our God took care of us, and while we traveled, he prevented any enemies from attacking or robbing us. **32**After we arrived in Jerusalem, we rested for three days. **33**Then on the fourth day we went to the temple of our God. There the priests and Levites weighed out the silver and gold and the other items and gave them to the leaders there. The leaders there were two priests, Meremoth the son of Uriah and Eleazar the son of Phinehas, and two Levites, Jozabad the son of Jeshua and Noadiah the son of Binnui. **34**They counted everything, and wrote down how much each item weighed, and wrote a description of each one as they received it.

35The Babylonian soldiers had captured our ancestors and taken them away to Babylon, but now we who are their descendants have safely returned {to Israel}. So we offered sacrifices of burnt offerings to our God: 12 bulls, {one} for {each of the 12 tribes of} the Israelite people, 96 rams, and 77 lambs. We also sacrificed 12 male goats to atone for the sins {that all of the Israelite people had committed}. We offered all of these sacrifices to Yahweh by putting them on the fire {of the altar}.

36Some of us who had returned from Babylonia took the letter that the king had given to us to the governors of the king’s provinces and to the officials of the province west of the Euphrates River. {After they read the letter,} they did what the king commanded for us {Israelite} people and for the temple of God.”

Chapter 9

1“After that, {some of} the {Jewish} leaders came to me and said, ‘Many Israelites and {even some} priests and Levites have not kept themselves from doing what the other people who are living in this land do. They are doing the same disgusting things that those people do. Those people are from the Canaanite, Hittite, Perizzite, Jebusite, Ammonite, Moabite, Egyptian, and Amorite people groups. **2**Specifically, some Israelite men have married women from these groups, and they have allowed their sons to do the same thing. So they are making us, God’s sacred people, to be no longer distinct from the other groups that live here. In fact, some of our leaders and officials have been the first ones to betray God in this way!’

3When I heard that, {I was so sad and angry that} I tore my clothes and my robe. I even pulled out some hair from my head and my beard. Then I sat down. I was very dismayed. **4**Many of the Jews still respected God’s commandment {not to marry foreign women}, and they were upset and afraid because some of those who had returned from Babylonia had disobeyed it. They gathered around me as I sat there dismayed until the time of the evening sacrifice.

5When it was time to offer the evening sacrifice, I stopped sitting there, silently showing how ashamed and sad I felt. Still wearing those torn clothes, I got on my knees and opened my hands {in prayer} to Yahweh, my God, **6**and this is what I prayed: ‘God, I belong to you. Yet I am very ashamed even to approach you in prayer. This is because the sins that we Israelites have committed are very bad. It is as though our sins are so many that they have risen up in a heap that is higher than our heads. We are so guilty for committing those sins that it is as though the heap of them has risen all the way up to you in heaven. **7**Since the time of our ancestors until now, we{, the Jewish people,} have been very guilty of sinning {against you}. That is the reason why you, God, allowed {the armies of} the kings of other lands to do whatever they wanted to do with our people and with our kings and our priests. They killed {many of} them, they captured {many of} them, they robbed {many of} them, and they caused them all to be disgraced, just as we are today.

8But for just a little while now, Yahweh our God, you have been kind to us. You have allowed some of us to survive. You have given us a secure home in your sacred place. You have made us joyful and given us some freedom, even though the Persian king is still our master. **9**Yes, we are like slaves, but even so, you have not abandoned us. Instead, you have caused the kings of Persia to act very kindly toward us. They have given us some freedom and allowed us to rebuild your temple, which had been destroyed. They have allowed us to live safely here in the province of Judah and the city of Jerusalem.

10Our God, there is nothing that we can say now to defend ourselves after all {of the sinful things that we have done}. We have continued to disobey your commands. **11**They are the commands that you gave to your servants, the prophets, to tell to us. They told us that it was as though the land that we would occupy was a filthy land because the people who live there do disgusting things. They said that those people continually do shameful things, making it seem like the land is full of filth from one end to the other. **12**{They said,} "Therefore do not allow your daughters to marry their sons! Do not allow your sons to marry their daughters! Do not ever try to cause things to go well for those people! If you obey these instructions, your nation will be strong. You will enjoy the good crops that grow on the land, and the land will belong to your descendants forever."

13But you punished us because we became very guilty for doing wicked things. Still, you, our God, have not punished us as much as we deserve for you to punish us. I say this because you have allowed this group of us to survive. **14**However, some of us are again disobeying your commands. Some of us have married women from the people groups that do those detestable things. If we continue to do that, you will be so angry with us that you will destroy us completely, leaving none of us to survive!

15Yahweh, God of Israel, you always do the right thing! Because of that, you have continually allowed some of us to survive, just as you have done with this group now. But we acknowledge that we are guilty of disobeying you and so because of what we have done, we do not deserve even to pray to you."'

Chapter 10

1Ezra prostrated himself on the ground in front of the temple as he cried and prayed {to God}. He was confessing {to God the sins that the people had committed}. While he was doing that, a very large crowd of Israelites gathered around him, consisting of men, women, and children. They all cried very, very much {because they had sinned against God}.

2Then Shecaniah, the son of Jehiel from the clan of Elam, spoke. He said this to Ezra: "We have disobeyed our God. Some of us have married women who are not Israelites. They come from the other people groups that live around us. But we can still hope {that Yahweh will be merciful to} us Israelite people. **3**Here is what I suggest. We should do what God told us to do in his laws. We should make an agreement with our God that we will divorce our foreign wives and send them away with their children. We will do everything according to what you, sir, and the others who greatly respect what our God has commanded, tell us to do. **4**Since you are our leader, get going, and be courageous, and do {what is necessary to fix this problem}. We will do whatever you say."

5So Ezra acted {to fix the problem}. He demanded that all of the Israelite people, including the leaders of the priests and the Levites, solemnly declare that they would do what Shekaniah said that they should do. So they all solemnly promised {to do that}. **6**Then Ezra went away from in front of the temple and went to the room where Jehohanan the grandson of Eliashib lived. Ezra continued to grieve because some of the Israelites who had returned from Babylonia had not faithfully obeyed God's laws. So while he was there, he did not eat or drink anything.

7Then the leaders sent a message to all the people in the province of Judan and the city of Jerusalem. They told them that all the Jews who had returned from Babylonia had to come to Jerusalem immediately. **8**The leaders announced the following penalties for anyone who did not arrive within three days. They would take away all the

property belonging to that person, and they would banish that person from the community of Israelites. **9**So within three days, by the twentieth day of the ninth month, all the men from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin gathered in Jerusalem. They were sitting in the courtyard in front of the temple. They were trembling because it was raining hard and {because they were worried that they would be punished} for what they had done.

10Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, “Some of you have sinned very badly {against God}. Specifically, you have married women who are not Israelites. By doing that, you have made us Israelite people more guilty than we were before. **11**So now, confess your sin to Yahweh, the God whom your ancestors worshiped, and do what he commands. {That is,} separate yourselves from the people of other nations by divorcing your foreign wives.”

12The whole group answered, shouting loudly, “Yes, we must do what you have said.” **13**{Then one of them said,} “But we are a very large group, and it is raining hard. We cannot continue to stand outside in this rain. Also, since many of us have committed this sin, it will take a long time to make things right again. **14**So please allow our leaders to decide what we should all do. Tell everyone in each city who has married a woman who is not an Israelite to come at a time that you decide. They should each come with the elders and judges from their own city. If we do that, our God will stop being angry with us because of what we have done.”

15{Within the crowd,} Jonathan son of Asahel and Jahzeiah son of Tikvah said that they disagreed with this plan. Then Meshullam and Shabbethai, a descendant of Levi, said that they agreed with Jonathan and Jahzeiah. **16**But {they were the only ones who opposed the plan; all of} the others who had returned from Babylonia said that they would do it. So Ezra the priest chose men who were leaders from each of the clans and wrote down their names. On the first day of the tenth month these men met to investigate the matter. **17**By the first day of the first month {of the next year} they had finished determining which men had married women who were not Israelites.

18They determined that some of the descendants of the priests had married foreign women. These included some descendants of Joshua the son of Jozadak and of his brothers. Their names were Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib, and Gedaliah. **19**They solemnly promised to divorce their wives and they each offered a ram as a sacrifice to atone for their sins.

20In the clan of Immer there were Hanani and Zebadiah.

21In the clan of Harim there were Maaseiah, Elijah, Shemaiah, Jehiel, and Uzziah.

22In the clan of Pashhur there were Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad, and Elasah.

23The Levites who had married foreign women were Jozabad, Shimei, Kelaiah (whose other name was Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer.

24There was Eliashib the musician. Among the temple guards there were Shallum, Telem, and Uri.

25This is a list of the names of the other Israelites {who had married foreign wives}:

In the clan of Parosh there were Ramiah, Izziah, Malkijah, Mijamin, Eleazar, Malkijah, and Benaiah.

26In the clan of Elam there were Mattaniah, Zechariah, Jehiel, Abdi, Jeremoth, and Elijah.

27In the clan of Zattu there were Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Jeremoth, Zabad, and Aziza.

28In the clan of Bebai there were Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, and Athlai.

29In the clan of Bani there were Meshullam, Malluk, Adaiah, Jashub, and Sheal Jeremoth.

30In the clan of Pahath-Moab there were Adna, Kelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, Binnui, and Manasseh.

31In the clan of Harim there were Eliezer, Ishijah, Malkijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon, **32**Benjamin, Malluk, and
Shemariah.

33In the clan of Hashum there were Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, and Shimei.

34In the clan of Bani there were Maadai, Amram, Uel, **35**Benaiah, Bedeiah, Keluhi, **36**Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib,
37Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasu.

38In the clan of Binnui there were Shimei, **39**Shelemiah, Nathan, Adaiah, **40**Maknadebai, Shashai, Sharai, **41**Azarel,
Shelemiah, Shemariah, **42**Shallum, Amariah, and Joseph.

43In the clan of Nebo there were Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jaddai, Joel, and Benaiah. **44**All of those men had
married women who were not Israelites. Some of those women had borne children{, so when the men sent the
women away, they also sent their children with them}.

Nehemiah

Chapter 1

1I am Nehemiah, son of Hakaliah. {I am writing this account.}

My story begins in the month of Kislev during the twentieth year of the reign of King Artaxerxes {over the Persian Empire}. I was in the capital city of Susa. **2**Hanani, one of my brothers, came to see me, along with some other people from the province of Judah. I asked them about the Jews who had escaped and remained in Judah {many years earlier} when soldiers had forced many Jews to go {to Babylon}. I also asked about {the condition of} the city of Jerusalem.

3They said to me, “The Jews who escaped the exile and remained in the province of Judah are in a desperate situation. {The Babylonian soldiers} broke down the wall of Jerusalem {to get into the city}, and {they} burned down all of its gates. The people {living there} are defenseless.”

4When I heard about these things, I sat down and cried. I could not stop mourning for days. I went without food, and I prayed to the God who is in heaven.

5I said, “O Yahweh, you are the God who is in heaven. You are the great and awesome God. You always keep your promises faithfully to those who love you and obey your commandments. **6**Now please pay careful attention and listen to my prayer that I am praying to you now, as I have been constantly, for the people of Israel, your chosen people. I must confess the sins that we, the people of Israel, have committed against you. Both I and my family have also sinned. **7**We have acted very wickedly toward you. {Many years ago} you gave us your Law through your servant Moses. But we have not obeyed your Law.

8Please call to mind the promise that you made to your servant Moses. You told him, ‘If you Israelites do not obey my commandments, I will take you from your land and make you live among the other nations. **9**But if you become loyal to me again and start obeying my commandments once more, then I will bring you back to {your homeland of Judah}. That is the place {from} which I chose to start making myself famous throughout the world. I will do this no matter how far you have been taken away.’

10We are your chosen people, whom you rescued {from slavery in Egypt}. {You did that easily because} you are so very powerful. **11**O my Lord, please pay careful attention to my prayer and to the prayers of {my fellow Israelites}. We are eager to honor you. Please grant that the king {will agree to the request that I hope to make soon}.” At that time, I was {an important official who served the wine at} the king’s {table}.

Chapter 2

1I prayed like this for four months. Then one day in the month of Nisan, still in the twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes, something happened. {When it was time to serve} the wine, I took some and gave it to the king. I had never before looked sad in his presence.

2{No one was supposed to look unhappy in the king’s presence. But the king noticed that I did look sad.} So he asked me, “Why are you sad? I can tell that you are not sick. You must be unhappy about something.” This made me very afraid.

3I replied to the king, “Your Majesty, I hope you will live {a very long time}! {I am sorry, but I cannot help being sad.} I am sad because the city of Jerusalem, the place where my ancestors are buried, lies in ruins. {Our enemies} have burned down its gates.”

4The king replied to me, “What do you want {me to do for you}?” {Before I answered him}, I prayed to the God who is in heaven.

5Then I replied to the king, “If it seems like a good {idea} to you, and if you are pleased with me, then {please} allow me to go to Judah, to Jerusalem. {I would like} to {help my people} rebuild the city where my ancestors are buried.”

6{I was able to speak freely because this was a private meal,} with the queen sitting next to the king. The king asked me, “How long would you be away?” I told him how long I would be gone. That was acceptable to him, and he gave me permission to go. So I told him what day {I wanted to leave}.

7I also said to the king, “If it seems like a good {idea} to you, {please} give me letters {that I can show} to the governors of {the province} Beyond the River. In these letters, {please tell them} to give me {safe} passage through their province to Judah. **8**{Please} also {write} a letter {for me} to Asaph, the man who takes care of your royal forest {in that area}. {Please tell} him to give me timber to make the beams to support the gates of the fortress that is near the temple. {Please} also {tell him to give me timber} for the city wall and for the house that I will live in.”

God was with me and helping me, and so the king agreed to {all of} my {requests}.

9{When I left to travel to Judah,} the king sent along some army officers and soldiers riding on horses {to protect me}. When I reached {the province} Beyond the River, I went {to see} its governors. I showed them the letters the king had given me, {and they gave me safe passage}.

10{One of the people I showed my letters to was} Sanballat the Horonite. {He was the governor of Samaria, the area right next to Judah.} He and his deputy, Tobiah the Ammonite, became very upset when they learned that someone had come to help the people of Israel. {They did not want to see Judah become strong again, because that would be a threat to Samaria.} **11**But I made it {safely} to Jerusalem {despite their opposition}. I stayed there for three days,

12I did not say {publicly} what God was leading me to do for Jerusalem. Instead, I got up {secretly} in the night {to inspect the city walls}. I brought {only} a few other men with me. {So that we could work quietly,} the only animal I brought with me was the one that I was riding.

13That night we went out through the Valley Gate and went past the Dragon Well to the Rubbish Gate. We made a careful inspection of the walls of Jerusalem. We {noted where our enemies} had broken down the walls, and {where} they had burned up the wooden gates. **14**Then we came to the Fountain Gate and the Royal Pool. {The opening there was so narrow that} the animal I was riding could not get through. **15**So we followed {the path of} the {Kidron} Brook, {even though} it was night. {From there} we were able to look {up} at the wall {and see its condition}. {This route} brought us back {to where we started}. We re-entered {the city} through the Valley Gate, and I went back {home without being seen}.

16The city officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing. To that point I had not said {anything about it} to the Jewish leaders, the priests, the leading citizens, or the city officials. {I had not approached} anyone {about} doing the work {of rebuilding the walls}.

17{But} now I said to them, “You see what a desperate situation we are in. You see that Jerusalem lies in ruins, and {our enemies} have burned down its gates. {We need to} do something {about this!} {I challenge all of you to} join me in rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem. Then we will not have to feel ashamed any more.” **18**Then I told them how God had been with me and had been helping me. I also told them how the king had given me permission to come.

{When they heard this,} they said, “Let’s get going and start building!” They encouraged one another {and committed themselves} to the project.

19Then Sanballat the Horonite, his deputy Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian heard {that we had started to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem}. They ridiculed us mercilessly. They said, “What you are doing is not going to amount to anything! {But} you should not be rebelling against the king {like that}!”

20But I answered them {firmly}. I said, “The God who is in heaven is the one who will enable us to complete this project. We are his chosen people. We are going to start rebuilding. But you have absolutely nothing to do with what happens in Jerusalem.”

Chapter 3

1{These are the names of the people who helped to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem.} Eliashib the Supreme Priest and his fellow priests began by rebuilding the Sheep Gate. They dedicated this gate {to God, as a symbolic way of dedicating the entire wall.} Then they set the doors of the Sheep Gate in place. They rebuilt the wall as far as the Tower of 100 Soldiers and {beyond that} to the Tower of Hananel. Then they dedicated that part of the wall {to God} as well.

2Next to them, people from Jericho rebuilt {part of the wall}.

Next to them, Zaccur, the son of Imri, rebuilt {part of the wall}.

3The sons of Hassenaah rebuilt the Fish Gate. They framed it with {wooden} beams, they set its doors in place, and they installed bolts and bars {for locking the gate}.

4Next to them, Meremoth, the son of Uriah and grandson of Hakkoz, repaired {part of the wall}.

Next to him, Meshullam, the son of Berekiah and grandson of Meshezabel, repaired {part of the wall}.

Next to him, Zadok the son of Baana repaired {part of the wall}.

5Next to him, some people from Tekoa repaired {part of the wall}. But the leading citizens of Tekoa were too proud to do the work that the leaders {of Judah had asked them to do}.

6Joiada the son of Paseah, and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah, repaired the Old Gate. They framed it with {wooden} beams, they set its doors in place, and they installed bolts and bars {for locking the gate}.

7Next to them, Melatiah from {the city of} Gibeon, Jadon from {the town of} Meronoth, and other men from Gibeon and from the {city of} Mizpah repaired {part of the wall}. They repaired it as far as the residence of the governor of {the province} Beyond the River.

8Next to them, Uzziel the son of Harhaiah repaired {part of the wall}. He was one of the goldsmiths, {the workers who made jewelry and other objects from gold}.

Next to him, Hananiah repaired {part of the wall}. He was one of the workers who made perfumes. They rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.

9Next to them, Rephaiah the son of Hur repaired {part of the wall}. Rephaiah ruled half of the district of Jerusalem.

10Next to him, Jedaiah the son of Harumaph repaired {the part of the wall} near his house.

Next to him, Hattush the son of Hashabneiah repaired {part of the wall}.

11Malkijah the son of Harim and Hashub the son of Pahath-Moab repaired another section {of the wall}, along with the Tower of the Ovens.

12Next to them, Shallum the son of Hallohesh repaired {part of the wall}. Shallum ruled the {other} half of the district of Jerusalem. His daughers worked with him on the repairs.

13Hanun and some people from {the city of} Zanoah repaired the Valley Gate. They rebuilt the gate, they set its doors in place, and they installed bolts and bars {for locking the gate}. They also repaired 1500 feet of the wall, as far as the Rubbish Gate.

14Malkijah. the son of Rechab, repaired the Rubbish Gate. Malkijah ruled the district of Beth-Hakkerem. He rebuilt the gate, he set its doors in place, and he installed bolts and bars {for locking the gate}.

15Shallun the son of Kol-Hozeh repaired the Fountain Gate. Shallun ruled the district of Mizpah. He rebuilt the gate and put a roof over it, he set its doors in place, and he installed bolts and bars {for locking the gate}. Near the Pool of Siloam he also repaired the wall next to the royal garden, as far as the steps that went down from the City of David.

16Next to him, Nehemiah the son of Azbuk repaired {the wall} as far as the place opposite the tombs in {the City of} David, to the reservoir that the people had made and the army barracks. Nehemiah ruled half of the district of Beth-Zur.

17Next to him, some Levites repaired {parts of the wall}. One of them was Rehum the son of Bani. Next to them, Hashabiah, who ruled half of the district of Keilah, repaired {a section of the wall} on behalf of the people of his district.

18{Some other Levites} repaired the next {section of the wall}. Next to them, Binnui the son of Henadad, who ruled the other half of the district of Keilah, repaired {more of the wall}.

19Next to him, Ezer the son of Jeshua repaired another section {of the wall}. Ezer ruled the {city of} Mizpah. {He started} from a place in front of the steps that went up to the building for storing weapons, {and he finished} at the place where the wall bends slightly.

20Next to him, Baruch the son of Zabbai repaired another section with great enthusiasm, from the bend in the wall as far as the door of the house of Eliashib the Supreme Priest.

21Next to him, Meremoth, the son of Uriah and grandson of Hakkoz, repaired another section, from the door of the house of Eliashib to the end of that house.

22Next to him, some priests from the area around {Jerusalem} repaired {a section of the wall}.

23Next to them, Benjamin and Hasshub repaired {a section} opposite their house.

Azariah, the son of Maaseiah and grandson of Ananiah, repaired the next {section}, beside his house.

24Next to him, Binnui the son of Henadad repaired another section, from the house of Azariah to the bend in the wall as far as the bulwark. **25**{Next to him,} Palal the son of Uzai {repaired a section}. He began at the place opposite the bend in the wall {where} the watchtower is taller than the upper palace that King {Solomon built}. That is near the courtyard where the guards live. Next to him, Pedaiah the son of Parosh {repaired a section}.

26The temple servants who lived on Ophel {Hill} {repaired the wall} as far as the eastern side of the Water Gate, {where there is} a tall tower.

27Next to them, the people from Tekoa repaired another section, from opposite the very tall watchtower as far as the wall at Ophel {Hill}.

28A group of priests repaired {the wall} starting at the Horse Gate. Each one repaired {the section} in front of his own house.

29Next to them, Zadok the son of Immer repaired {the section} in front of his house.

Then Shemaiah the son of Shecaniah, who was the gatekeeper at the East Gate, repaired the next {section}.

30Next to him, Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section.

Next to them, Meshullam the son of Berechiah repaired {the section} opposite the rooms {where} he {lived}.

31Malkijah, who was {another} one of the goldsmiths, repaired the next {section}, as far as the building used by the temple servants and the merchants. That building was opposite the Appointment Gate. He {rebuilt the wall} as far as the upper apartments {of this building}, which were on the corner.

32Some of the {other} goldsmiths, along with some merchants, repaired {the last section of the wall} from the corner apartments to the Sheep Gate.

Chapter 4

1When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the {city} wall, he became furious, and he mocked the Jews.

2He spoke to the {other provincial} officials and army officers. He said, “These weak Jews will not be able to accomplish anything! They will never restore {the city! Their God} will not help them. They do not realize what a long time it would take to repair {that wall. The only way} they can get stones {is} by pulling them out of rubbish heaps. And {the Babylonians} burned {the city, so those} stones are probably weak {anyway}.”

3Tobiah the Ammonite was standing beside Sanballat. He made fun of the Jews by saying, “Right! The wall that they are building {is so weak} that if a fox walked across the top {of it}, it would fall down!”

4{When I heard about what they were saying, I prayed to God and said,} “O our God, listen {to the way} they are mocking us! Make {them fail in their attempts to stop us,} so that {other} people will mock them! Allow their enemies to capture them and force them to go to a foreign land! **5**{They are guilty, and they have sinned against you.} Do not take away their guilt, and do not ignore their sin! {I am asking this} because they are also causing others to be angry at the people who are rebuilding the wall!”

6But we kept building the wall, {and after some time,} we finished the wall around the whole city to about half the necessary height. Everyone was determined to accomplish this.

7But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the men from {the land of} Arabia, the men from {the nation of} Ammon, and the men from {the city of} Ashdod heard that we were continuing to repair the wall of Jerusalem and to fill in the gaps, they became furious. **8**All of them together made a plan to come and fight against the people of Jerusalem. They wanted to make the people inside the city confused {and divided}. **9**But we prayed to our God {to protect us}, and we stationed lookouts {on the walls} at all times to watch out for them.

10Then the people of Judah started saying, “The people who are carrying {the stones} are getting worn out. There is too much rubbish. We are not going to be able to {finish} rebuilding the wall.”

11Then our enemies {started} saying, “Before {the Jews} know we are coming, we will rush {down} on them and kill them and stop their work {on the wall}!”’

12And when some of the Jews who lived near {our enemies} came {to Jerusalem}, they pleaded with us repeatedly, “Let {our men} return {home so} they {can defend} us!”

13But I put {guards} behind the wall at the places where it was low or where there were gaps. I also had people from each family group stand {guard} with their swords, spears, and bows and arrows. **14**After I had inspected {everything}, I summoned the leading citizens and the city officials and many of the other people, and I said to them, “Do not be afraid of our enemies! The Lord is great and awesome, {so} think about {what he can do}. And fight to {protect} your families, your sons and daughters, your wives, and your homes!”

15When our enemies learned that we had found out about {their plan}, they realized that God had kept them {from launching a surprise attack}. {They decided not to attack us.} So we all went back to {working on} the wall. Each person continued doing {the same} work {as before}. **16**But after that, {only} half of my servants worked {on the wall}. The other half of them {stood guard} armed with spears, shields, bows and arrows, and metal armor. Officers {stood} behind the workers and guards {to encourage everyone and to give orders in case there was an attack}.

17Those who were building the wall and those who carried the heavy loads {always} had their weapons with them {so that they would be prepared to fight off an attack}. **18**Each builder worked with his sword strapped to his side. {I stationed} someone next to me who would blow a ram's horn {if we needed a signal}.

19Then I said to the leading citizens, the city officials, and many of the other people, "We are working over a very wide area, and we are far apart from each other along the wall. **20**But wherever you hear {the man} sounding the ram's horn, gather around us at that place. Our God will fight for us!"

21So we continued to work {on rebuilding the wall}. Half of the men {served as guards} and kept their weapons ready at {all} times. **22**At that time, I also said to the people, "Each {worker} and his servant must spend the night inside Jerusalem {and not go home if they live outside the city}. {That way} the city will have plenty of defenders {even} at night, and they can {still} work {on the wall} during the daytime." **23**{During that time} none of us took off our clothes. I did not, and my brothers, my servants, and my personal bodyguard did not. Each of us {always had} our weapons {with us}, {even when we were washing ourselves}.

Chapter 5

1{Around this same time,} many of the men and their wives complained bitterly about what their fellow Jews were doing to them.

2Some of them began, "We have many children. We need to get {a lot of} food to feed them {all}."

3Others added, "We have had to promise to give someone our fields, vineyards, and houses if we do not pay back the money {he} has loaned us. We had {to borrow the money} to buy food during this time when food is scarce."

4Still others said, "We have had to borrow money to {pay} the taxes that the king {commanded us to pay} on our fields and our vineyards. **5**{This is how bad things have gotten.} We are selling our children into slavery. In fact, we have even sold some of our daughters. Our creditors took the fields and vineyards {we pledged as security for loans}, so there was nothing {else} we could do. But we are Jews, just like the people who are doing these things to us!"

6I got very angry when I heard these things that they were complaining about. **7**I thought hard about what to do. Then I brought charges against the leading citizens and the city officials. I called together a large group of people {to hear} the charges against them. I told these leaders, "You are charging interest {on loans} to your fellow Jews. {You know that is forbidden in the Law of Moses}."

8I said to them, "Whenever our fellow Jews have had to sell themselves into slavery to people from {other} nations, to {the best of} our ability we have been buying them back. But you are actually selling your fellow Jews into slavery to get back the money they owe you. These are some of the very people we have been buying back!" They knew that these charges were true, so there was absolutely nothing they could say in response.

9Then I said to them, "What you are doing is wrong! You certainly ought to obey God and do what is right! Otherwise, our enemies will mock us even more. **10**I myself, my relatives, and my servants have been lending money and grain {to anyone in need without charging interest}. All of us should stop charging interest on loans. **11**Give them back their fields, vineyards, olive orchards, and houses. Do it right away! And pay back the 12% annual {interest you have been collecting} on the money, grain, wine, and olive oil that you have lent them."

12These leaders replied, "Yes, we will do what you say. We will give back {their fields, vineyards, olive orchards, and houses}. And we will stop {charging} them {interest}."

Then I called the priests, and I made the leaders swear {to God in front of them} that they would do what they had promised. **13**I also shook out the folds of my robe and said to them, "In this same way, may God fling anyone who does not keep this oath away from everything he owns. Yes, may that person lose everything!"

Then everyone who was there said, “We agree!” And they praised Yahweh. After that none of the Jews took houses or fields to guarantee loans, and none of them charged interest any more.

14Here is something else I did to help the people. Artaxerxes, the king {of Persia}, had appointed me to be the governor of {the province of} Judah during the twentieth year {of his reign}. During the twelve years from the time that he appointed me until the thirty-second year of his reign, I did not accept the governor’s food allowance, and {I did not use it to feed} my relatives. {I knew that the people were poor and could not afford to pay for it.} **15**The governors before me had made life very difficult for the people. They had demanded that the people supply them with bread and wine and forty silver shekels every day. Even their servants oppressed the people. But I respected and honored God, and so I did not oppress them. **16**I devoted myself to the work of {rebuilding} the wall. {My relatives and I} did not buy any property, {even though we could have gotten it cheaply because the poor were so desperate}. I also assigned all of my servants to work {on the wall}.

17{As governor,} I {was responsible for} feeding 150 Jewish leaders and city officials. I also entertained {Jewish} visitors who came from nearby countries. **18**Each day {I told my servants} to prepare {for us} one ox, six good sheep, and various kinds of poultry. I paid for these myself. Every ten days I also brought in an abundant supply of various kinds of wine. But {I knew that} the people were struggling to survive, and so {I paid for all of these things at my own expense}. I did not accept the governor’s food allowance.

19My God, think of me, and reward me for all the good that I have done for the people of Judah.

Chapter 6

1Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arabian, and our other enemies learned that we had finished rebuilding the wall, and that there were now no more gaps in it. (However, we had not yet put the doors in the gates.) **2**So Sanballat and Geshem sent me {a message that} said, “We want to arrange to meet with you in one of the villages in the plain of Ono.” But {I knew that they were saying this because} they wanted to harm me.

3So I sent messengers to tell them, “The work I am doing {here} is very important. I am not able to travel {while it is going on}. There is no reason for me to stop the work and leave it so that I can meet with you.”

4They sent me the same message four times, and {each time} I refused them for this same reason.

5Then Sanballat sent one of his servants to me bringing the same request for a fifth time. This time the message was written, but it was not sealed. Sanballat {left the letter unsealed so that others would find out what it said, because he wanted to pressure me to meet with him}. **6**The letter said, “{The people in} the countries {around us} are saying, and Geshem confirms {that it is true}, that you and the Jewish people are planning to rebel {against King Artaxerxes}. That is why you are rebuilding the wall. {They are also} saying that you intend to become the king of the Jews yourself. **7**{These people are} also {saying that} you have appointed prophets to make a proclamation about you in Jerusalem. They are saying, ‘The Jews {now} have a king {of their own}!’ King Artaxerxes will certainly hear these reports, {and when he does, he will be very angry with you}. So we really should meet together and talk {about this}.”

8I sent {a message} back to him saying, “None of these things that you are saying are true. You are just making them up yourself.”

9I knew that they were all {just trying to} frighten us. They thought, “{The Jews will become so afraid that} they will stop working {on the wall}, and they will never finish {rebuilding it}.” So {I prayed, “O God,} give me courage.{”}

10{Around this time} I went to visit Shemaiah, the son of Delaiah and grandson of Mehetabel. {I went to see him in his home, because} he was not leaving {his house}. He was a priest, and he was trying to show that it was not safe for Jewish leaders to go out in public. He told me, “{We are not safe even here.} We need to go into the temple and lock the doors, because people are trying to kill you. One night they are going to come and kill you.”

11I responded, “I am not the kind of man who would run away! Besides, I am the governor, {and everyone knows me,} so I could not save my life by {trying to} hide in the temple. I refuse to do it!”

12All of a sudden I realized that God had not given Shemaiah a prophetic message for me. Instead, he was saying these things because Tobiah and Sanballat had paid him {to say them}. **13**{They} had paid him the money specifically to {say things that} would scare me. They were hoping they could make me sin {by abandoning my responsibilities and hiding in the temple}. {If I had done that,} they would have ruined my reputation and discredited me.

14{So I prayed,} “My God, treat Tobiah and Sanballat the way they deserve for what they have done. Do the same for the female prophet Noadiah and all the other prophets who are {trying to} make me afraid.”

15We finished {rebuilding} the wall on the twenty-fifth {day} of the month of Elul, after {working on it} for 52 days.

16When all of our enemies learned that we had completed the rebuilding in such a short time, they realized that our God must have helped {us}. This made the people in the countries around us lose all of their confidence.
17During this time, the leading citizens of Judah were writing many letters to Tobiah {to give him information about me}, and he was sending letters back to them {with instructions}. **18**Tobiah was married to the daughter of {a powerful and influential member of the community,} Shecaniah the son of Arah. His son Jehohanan was married to the daughter of {another powerful and influential man,} Meshullam the son of Berechiah. And so, for those reasons, many people in Judah had sworn oaths to {be loyal to} Tobiah. **19**{The people who were loyal to Tobiah} would also {come and} tell me what good things he was doing, and then they would report to him everything I said {in response}. Tobiah also sent me many letters to try to make me afraid.

Chapter 7

1Once we had finished rebuilding the wall and we had put the doors in the gates, we assigned the gatekeepers and singers and Levites to their tasks. **2**I appointed two men to {help me} govern Jerusalem, my brother Hanani and Hananiah, the commander of the fortress {in Jerusalem}. I appointed Hananiah because he was trustworthy, and because he showed God more reverence and respect than most people do.

3I told them, “Do not open the gates of Jerusalem until broad daylight. {That way we will be able to see anything our enemies are doing.} Have the gatekeepers close {the gates} and put the bars across the doors while they are still guarding {the gates before they go home for the night}.” I also told them, “Have the men who live in Jerusalem take turns keeping watch in their own neighborhoods.”

4The city of Jerusalem covered a large area, but {at that time} not many people lived in the city, and they had not yet built houses {for themselves}. **5**So {as a first step towards filling Jerusalem with people again}, God led me to gather together the leading citizens and the city officials and the other people {living in the city} to register them according to their family histories. I also found a book containing the records of the first group of people who had returned {to Jerusalem} from the exile. This is what those records said.

6“These are {the names of} the people from Judah who returned home from exile. Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had taken {their ancestors} away {to Babylon}. But they returned to Jerusalem and to {other places in} Judah. They returned to the {same} towns where their {ancestors had lived}.

7The people who came back were following Zerubbabel, Joshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, and Baanah.

{This is a list of} the number of men from {each} Israelite {clan who returned}:

82172 men from {the clan of} Parosh;

9372 men from {the clan of} Shephatiah;

10652 men from {the clan of} Arah;

112818 men from {the clan of} Pahath-Moab, who are descendants of Jeshua and Joab;

121254 men from {the clan of} Elam;

13845 men from {the clan of} Zattu;

14760 men from {the clan of} Zakkai;

15648 men from {the clan of} Binnui;

16628 men from {the clan of} Bebai;

172322 men from {the clan of} Azgad;

18667 men from {the clan of} Adonikam;

192067 men from {the clan of} Bigvai;

20655 men from {the clan of} Adin;

2198 men from {the clan of} Ater who were descendants of Hezekiah;

22328 men from {the clan of} Hashum;

23324 men from {the clan of} Bezai;

24112 men from {the clan of} Hariph;

2595 men from {the clan of} Gibeon.

26{Some other} men {also returned, whose ancestors had lived in these towns}:

188 men from Bethlehem and Netophah;

27128 men from Anathoth;

2842 men from Beth-Azmaveth;

29743 men from Kiriath-Jearim, Kephirah and Beeroth;

30621 men from Ramah and Geba;

31122 men from Michmas;

32123 men from Bethel and Ai;

3352 men from a {small town} called Nebo;

341254 men from a {small town} called Elam;

35320 men from Harim;

36345 men from Jericho;

37721 men from Lod, Hadid, and Ono;

383930 men from Senaah.

39These priests also returned:

973 men from {the clan of} Jedaiah who are descendants of Jeshua;

401052 men from {the clan of} Immer;

411247 men from {the clan of} Pashhur;

421017 men from {the clan of} Harim.

43These Levites also returned:

74 men from the clan of Jeshua and {the clan of} Kadmiel, all of them descendants of Hodevah.

44148 members of the {sacred} choir {also returned}. All of them were from the clan of Asaph.

45138 {temple} gatekeepers {also returned}. They were from the clan of Shallum, the clan of Ater, the clan of Talmon, the clan of Akkub, the clan of Hatita, and the clan of Shobai.

46Some temple workers also returned. They were from the clan of Ziha, the clan of Hasupha, the clan of Tabbaoth, **47**the clan of Keros, the clan of Sia, the clan of Padon, **48**the clan of Lebanah, the clan of Hagabah, the clan of Shalmai, **49**the clan of Hanan, the clan of Giddel, the clan of Gahar, **50**the clan of Reaiah, the clan of Rezin, the clan of Nekoda, **51**the clan of Gazzam, the clan of Uzza, the clan of Paseah, **52**the clan of Besai, the clan of Meunim, the clan of Nephushesim, **53**the clan of Bakbuk, the clan of Hakupha, the clan of Harhur, **54**the clan of Bazlith, the clan of Mehida, the clan of Harsha, **55**the clan of Barkos, the clan of Sisera, the clan of Temah, **56**the clan of Neziah, and the clan of Hatipha.

57Some descendants of the laborers that King Solomon {first conscripted also returned}.

These were from the clan of Sotai, the clan of Sophereth, the clan of Perida, **58**the clan of Jaalah, the clan of Darkon, the clan of Giddel, **59**the clan of Shephatiah, the clan of Hattil, the clan of Pochereth-Hazzebaim, and the clan of Amon. **60**Altogether, there were 392 descendants of the {temple} workers and {conscripted} laborers {who returned}.

61Another group also returned {that came from the towns of} Tel-Melah, Tel-Harsha, Kerub, Addon, and Immer {in Babylonia}. But they could not prove that they were descendants of Israelites.

62These 642 men were from the clan of Delaiah, the clan of Tobiah, and the clan of Nekoda.

63Some priests {also returned who were} from the clan of Hobaiah, the clan of Hakkoz, and the clan of Barzillai. Barzillai had married a woman who was a descendant of a man named Barzillai from the region of Gilead. He had taken the family name of his wife. **64**These {priests} searched the records that contained the names of the Israelite ancestors, but they could not find the names of their families. {They did not qualify to be priests because they could not trace their family history,} so they were not allowed to have {the rights and duties of} priests. **65**The governor told them that they must not eat any of the share of food taken from the sacrifices and kept for the priests. They would have to wait until the priest {in charge of the temple} had begun his duties and could ask {God} what to do {about this situation}. **66**Altogether, 42360 people {returned to Judea}.

67There were also 7337 male servants and female servants, and 245 male singers and female singers.

68{The Israelites also brought back from Babylonia} 736 horses, 245 mules, **69**435 camels, and 6720 donkeys.

70Some of the leaders of the ancestral clans gave {gifts} for the work {of rebuilding the temple}.

The governor gave into the treasury more than 8 kilograms of gold, 50 bowls {to be used in the temple}, and 530 robes for the priests.

71Some of the leaders of the ancestral clans also gave into the {temple} treasury for the work {of rebuilding the temple a total of} 153 kilograms of gold, and 1460 kilograms of silver.

72And the remainder of the people gave {a total of} 153 kilograms of gold, 1330 kilograms of silver, and 67 robes for the priests." **73**So the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the {temple} workers, and many ordinary people {started to} live in the {towns and} cities {of Judea where} their {ancestors had lived}. All these people were Israelites. By the seventh month {all of} the Israelites had gone to their cities and had started living in them.

Chapter 8

1A huge crowd of people gathered together in the plaza that was near the Water Gate. They asked Ezra the scribe to bring out the scroll of the law that Moses {had written down}, and which Yahweh had given to the people of Israel {for them to obey its rules and commands}. **2**Ezra the priest, {who served God by offering sacrifices in the temple,} brought out the law {and presented it} before all the people, to both men and women, and {children} who were old enough to understand what he read. He did this on the first day of the seventh month {of that year}. **3**So he read aloud from the book in the plaza that was near the Water Gate throughout the whole morning. He read it in front of all the people, both men and women and {children} who {were old enough} to understand what he read. And all the people listened carefully to the laws that were written {on the scroll}. **4**Ezra the scribe stood on top of a {high} wooden platform that the people had built for this purpose. At his right side stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah. At his left side stood Pedaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam. **5**Ezra {stood on the platform} above all the people so that everyone could see him. He opened the scroll, and as he did that all the people stood up.

6Then Ezra praised Yahweh, the great God, and all the people lifted up their hands {to show that they were praying with him}. {At the end of his prayer} they said, "We agree!" Then they all bowed down with their faces touching the ground, and they worshiped Yahweh. **7**Then Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, who were all Levites, explained the meaning of the laws {of Moses} to the people who were standing there. **8**They read clearly from the scroll of the law of God, and they explained what it meant, so that the people understood what {Ezra and the others} were reading.

9Then the people began to cry from sadness when they heard what the law said. So Nehemiah (who was the governor), Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were explaining the meaning to the people, said to all the people, "Today is a festival day on which you are supposed to worship Yahweh your God. Do not mourn or cry!"

10Then Nehemiah said to them, "{Now} go home, eat some good food, and drink something sweet. And share some of it with those who are not able to afford {rich food and drink}, because today is a holy day set apart {to worship} our Lord. So do not grieve, because the joy that Yahweh gives will strengthen you."

11The Levites also told the people {who were crying} to stop, saying, "Today is a holy day! So, shhh. Do not grieve."

12So all the people went {home} to eat and drink and share what they had. And they were very happy, because they understood {the meaning of} the words that {Ezra had read and} the others had explained to them.

13On the next day, the clan leaders of all the people and the priests and the Levites met together with Ezra the scribe. They wanted {to study} carefully what was written in the law {that Yahweh had given to Moses}. They wanted to understand it {better}. **14**They learned that the law said that Yahweh had told Moses to command the Israelite people to live in shelters during a festival in the seventh month. {This was so that they would remember that their ancestors had lived in shelters when they walked in the wilderness after leaving Egypt.} **15**{They} also {learned} that they should publicly proclaim, in all their towns and in Jerusalem, that the people should go into the hills and cut branches. These should be from olive trees, wild olive trees, myrtle trees, palm trees, and shade trees. They must bring these branches and make shelters {to live in during the festival}. That was what the scroll instructed.

16So the people went out {of the towns and cut branches} and brought {them} to make shelters for themselves. They built shelters on the {flat} roofs {of their houses}, in their courtyards, in the courtyards of the temple, in the plaza near the Water Gate, and in the plaza near the Ephraim Gate. **17**All of the Israelite people who had returned from Babylon built shelters and lived in them {for one week}. Now the Israelite people had never celebrated {that festival} like this since Joshua the son of Nun {led them into this territory}. This was the {first} time they were doing it. And the people were very happy. **18**Every day during that week {Ezra} read aloud {to the people} from the scroll of the law of God. They celebrated the festival for seven days. On the eighth day, they called for all the people to come together {so they could hold a ceremony to bring the festival to an end}. That was what the scroll instructed.

Chapter 9

1Two days later, the Israelite people gathered together again. {To show that they were sorry for their sins,} they went without food, they wore {clothes made from} rough cloth, and they put dirt on their {heads}. **2**The descendants of Israel separated themselves away from all the descendants of foreigners. They stood there and confessed their own sins and the wicked things their ancestors had done. **3**They stood in place and {listened to someone} read from the scroll of the law of Yahweh their God for three hours. Then for another three hours they confessed their sins and bowed down and worshiped Yahweh their God.

4{Some of} the Levites stood up on the stairs, including Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, another {man} named Bani, and Kenani. And they cried out {sorrowfully} in a loud voice to Yahweh their God. **5**Then some Levites spoke. They were named Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah.

They said, “Stand up and praise Yahweh your God, who has always {lived} and will {live} forever! Yahweh, we praise your glorious name! Your name is more important than everything else that is good and wonderful! **6**You are Yahweh, and no one else. You made the heavens that are above everything, and all that lives in the heavens {above the earth}. You made the earth and everything that is on it, and you made the seas and everything that is in them. You are the one who causes all living things to be alive. Everything that {lives} in the heavens {above the earth} worships you.

7You are Yahweh! You are the God who chose Abram and brought him out of {the city of} Ur, where the Chaldean people {lived}. You changed his name to Abraham. **8**You saw that he was faithful to you in his inner being. You made a promise to him {pledged with blood}, promising that you would give a land {to him} and to his descendants. This was the land where the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, and the Girgashites {lived}. And you did what you promised, because you {always} do what is right.

9You saw how {the Egyptians} mistreated our ancestors in Egypt. You heard them cry out {to you for help} when they were beside the Red Sea. **10**You knew that {the leaders of Egypt} were treating {our ancestors} very arrogantly. So you performed miracles for Pharaoh and his officials and all the people of Egypt. {These proved you are the true God.} You made yourself famous, and you are still famous! **11**You divided the sea in front of {your people Israel}, and they {walked} through the middle of the sea on dry land. But you drowned {the soldiers of the Egyptian army} under the waters. They sank as a stone sinks in deep water! **12**During the day you led {your people} by a cloud {that looked like a huge} pillar. At night you led them by a fire {that looked like a huge} pillar. It shone on the path in front of them to show them where they should walk. **13**When {our ancestors} were at Sinai Mountain, you appeared to them and spoke to them from heaven. You gave them honest instructions and trustworthy laws. You gave them good rules and commands. **14**You taught them about your Sabbath {day of rest}. It is set apart {from the other days of the week}. You gave commands and rules and laws for the people by your servant Moses. **15**When they were hungry, you gave them bread from heaven. When they were thirsty, you gave them water from a rock. You told them to go and take the land {of Canaan}, which you had promised with a vow to give them.

16But our ancestors were proud and stubborn. They refused to obey what you commanded them {to do}. **17**They refused to obey you. They did not consider all the miracles that you had performed for them. They became stubborn and rebelled against you. They appointed a leader to take {them} back {to Egypt}, where they would be

slaves {again}! But you are a God who forgives us. You act kindly and mercifully {toward us}. You do not become angry quickly. Instead, you faithfully love {us} very much. So you did not leave {our ancestors} alone {in the desert}. **18**Indeed {you did not leave them alone}, even though they made an idol for themselves {that resembled} a calf. They said {about the idol}, 'This is our god, who brought us up out of Egypt.' By doing that they insulted you greatly. **19**But because you always act mercifully, you did not leave them alone in the desert. During the daytime, the cloud {that looked like a huge} pillar above them continued to lead them in the way {you wanted them to go}. And during the night, the fire {that looked like a huge} pillar shone on the path in front of them to show them where to walk. **20**You gave them your good Spirit to instruct them. You continued to give them manna when they were hungry, and you gave them water when they were thirsty. **21**For forty years you took care of them in the desert. During all that time, they had everything they needed. Their clothes did not wear out. Their feet did not swell up, {even though they were continually walking}. **22**You helped {our ancestors} to defeat {the armies of great} kings {who ruled} many people. {By doing that,} you allowed {our ancestors} to settle in every part {of this land}. They took over the land that King Sihon ruled from {the city of} Heshbon and the land that King Og ruled in the Bashan {area}. **23**You gave so many children to {our ancestors} that they were like the stars {in the sky}. You brought them into this land, which you had told their parents to enter and take for themselves {so that they could live there}.

24Their children went in and took the land. You enabled them to defeat the people who were living there. They were {the descendants of} Canaan. You enabled them to conquer their kings and all the people who {lived} there. They were able to do whatever they wanted to those people. **25**{Our ancestors} captured cities that had walls around them. They took possession of fertile fields. They took possession of houses that were already full of all kinds of good things, and wells that someone had already dug. They took possession of many vineyards and groves of olive trees and fruit trees. They ate all that they wanted and became fat. They enjoyed {all} the many good things you did {for them}.

26But they turned against you. They rejected your law. They killed the prophets who warned them that they should return to {obeying} you. They {said and} did very evil things {against you}. **27**So you allowed their enemies to defeat them. But when their enemies caused them to suffer, they called out to you. You heard them from heaven, and because you are very merciful, you sent them people to help them. Those {leaders} rescued them from their enemies.

28But when there was {a time of} peace {again}, {our ancestors} again did evil things that you {hated}. So you allowed their enemies to conquer {them} and rule over them. But {whenever} they returned to you and cried out to you again {to help them}, you heard them from heaven. You rescued them many times, because you {always} act mercifully. **29**You warned them that they should return to {obeying} your laws {again}. But they became proud {and stubborn}. They would not listen to your commands. They sinned by disobeying your decrees, even though a person lives by obeying them. They purposely ignored what you commanded them to do. They became stubborn and refused to obey.

30You were patient with them for a long time. You warned them by {the messages} your Spirit gave to your prophets. But they did not listen {to those messages}. So again you allowed {the armies} of the nations nearby to defeat them. **31**But because you act very mercifully, you did not destroy them completely. You never left them alone. Yes, you are a very gracious and merciful God!

32Our God, you are great and mighty and awesome! You {always} fulfill {your} promises and {always} faithfully love {us}! So now {we are praying}: Do not ignore all our difficulties. Consider all the troubles that our kings, our leaders, our priests, our prophets, our ancestors, and all of your people have experienced. We have been experiencing these troubles since {the armies of} the kings of Assyria {conquered us} until now. We are still experiencing them today. **33**{We know that} you have acted fairly in {letting} all these things happen to us. Yes, you have treated {us} as {we} deserve. But we have done evil things. **34**{In the past,} our kings, our leaders, our priests and our {other} ancestors did not obey your laws. They did not listen to your commands or the warnings that you gave them. **35**They had their own kings. They {enjoyed} the many good things that you provided in this large and fertile land that you gave them. But {even then,} they did not serve you. They would not stop doing evil things.

36Consider our situation! Today we {live like} slaves here in this land that you gave to our ancestors. You gave them this land so that they could enjoy all the good things that grow here. But consider us now! We are {like} slaves on this land. **37**The kings whom you have allowed to rule over us are enjoying {all} the good things that grow here. This is because we have sinned. They rule over our bodies and our cattle. They do whatever they please. We feel great distress. **38**Because of all this, we {the Israelite people} are making a solemn agreement. We are writing it on a scroll. We will write down {the names of} our leaders, our Levites, and our priests. Then we will seal the scroll."

Chapter 10

1These are {the names of} the people who signed the agreement:

Nehemiah the governor, the son of Hakaliah; Zedekiah the scribe.

2{The priests who signed the agreement included:}

Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah, **3**Pashhur, Amariah, Malkijah, **4**Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluk, **5**Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah, **6**Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch, **7**Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin, **8**Maaziah, Bilgai, and Shemaiah. Those are {the names of} the priests {who signed the agreement}.

9The Levites {who signed the agreement} were:

Jeshua the son of Azaniah, Binnui from the clan of Henadad, Kadmiel,

10{Some of} their associates also {signed the agreement, including}: Shebaniah, Hodiah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan,

11Mika, Rehob, Hashabiah, **12**Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah, **13**Hodiah, Bani, and Beninu.

14The Israelite leaders {who signed the agreement} were:

Parosh, Pahath-Moab, Elam, Zattu, and Bani, **15**Bunni, Azgad, Bebai, **16**Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin, **17**Ater, Hezekiah, Azzur, **18**Hodiah, Hashum, Bezai, **19**Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai, **20**Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir, **21**Meshezabel, Zadok, Jaddua, **22**Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah, **23**Hoshea, Hananiah, Hasshub, **24**Hallohesh, Pilha, Shobek, **25**Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah, **26**also Ahiah, Hanan, Anan, **27**Malluk, Harim, and Baanah.

28The rest of the people {joined in this solemn agreement. This included} the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, and the {temple} workers. {It also included} everyone who agreed only to worship and obey the God of Israel, along with their wives and their sons and daughters who were {old enough} to understand what they were {doing}. **29**They {all} joined with their leaders, who were important people, and together they all made a solemn agreement to obey {all} the laws that God had given by Moses his servant. They agreed that they would strictly obey everything that Yahweh our God had commanded, yes, {all of} his instructions. **30**This is what {they promised to do}: "We will not give our daughters {in marriage} to people {who live} in this land {who do not worship Yahweh}. We will not allow our sons to marry their daughters. **31**People from other groups {who live} in this land might bring merchandise and all kinds of food to sell on Sabbath days. But we will not buy anything from them on a Sabbath {day} or any other sacred day. Every seventh year, we will let {the fields} rest {and not plant any crops. That same year} we will not make anyone pay back {anything they owe} to another person. **32**We each also agreed to a pledge that {every} year we would pay 4 grams of silver for the {supplies} needed for the temple. **33**{Here is a list of those supplies.} The {sacred} bread that is placed {before God}. The grain that is {burned on the altar} each day. {The animals that} are completely burned up {on the altar} each day. The sacred offerings for the Sabbath days and for celebrating each new moon and other {festivals} that {God} told {us to celebrate}. {Other} offerings that are dedicated {to God}. {The animals} to be sacrificed to atone for the sins of the Israelite people. Anything else {that is needed} for the work of {taking care of} the temple.

34We have cast lots to determine when each clan of the priests, the Levites, and {the rest of} the people will bring an offering of wood to the temple. Each clan will do this at an appointed time every year. {The Levites will use} the

wood to burn {the sacrifices} on the altar that belongs to Yahweh our God. He commanded this in the law {he gave through Moses}. **35**We will also bring {an offering} to the temple every year from the first {grain} that we {harvest} and from all the first fruit that {grows on} all our trees. **36**We will also do something else that God commanded. We will bring our firstborn sons to the temple {for dedication}, and our firstborn calves and lambs and goats {as sacrifices}, to the priests who minister in the temple. **37**We will also bring supplies to the priests that {they} can store in the temple. These will include the first grain that we {harvest}, the first flour we {make}, the first fruit from all {our} trees, and the first wine and olive oil {that we produce}. We will also bring 10 percent of our harvest to the Levites. We will allow them to collect this 10 percent right in all the towns where we work. **38**A priest, one of the descendants of Aaron, will be with the Levites {and supervise} them when they collect that 10 percent. Then the Levites must bring 10 percent of what they have received to the temple. {The priests will put it} in the storerooms and it will support {them}. **39**That is how it will work. The Israelites and the Levites will bring their offerings of grain, wine, and olive oil to those storerooms. That is where {the priests} will store the equipment for the temple. And that is where {they will keep the food supplies} for the priests, the gatekeepers, and the singers who are serving at that time.

We promise that we will keep taking care of the temple."

Chapter 11

1So the {Israelite} leaders settled in Jerusalem {with their families}. The rest of the people cast lots to select one family out of ten to live in Jerusalem. That was the city set apart {for God}. The remaining nine families lived in the {other} towns. **2**The people {asked God to} bless all those who volunteered to live in Jerusalem.

3These are {the names of} the provincial officials who settled in Jerusalem. But in the towns of Judah, everyone lived on his own family property in their towns. This included the Israelites, the priests, the Levites, the temple servants, and the descendants of the servants of Solomon. **4**But some of the people of Judah and some of the people of Benjamin stayed and lived in Jerusalem.

Here are {the names of} the leaders who lived in Jerusalem.

From the descendants of Judah, one of them was Athaiah the son of Uzziah, the son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahalalel, a descendant of Perez.

5Another one was Maaseiah the son of Baruch, the son of Kol-Hozeh, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiah, the son of Joiarib, the son of Zechariah, who was one of the descendants of Shelah. **6**Altogether 468 men who were descendants of Perez lived in {the city of} Jerusalem. These men were {very} brave and skilled in combat.

7These are the descendants of Benjamin {who decided to live in Jerusalem}.

One of them was Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Joed, the son of Pedaiah, the son of Kolaiah, the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ithiel, the son of Jeshaiah.

8Two men who assisted him were Gabbai and Sallai. Altogether 928 people {from the tribe of Benjamin settled in Jerusalem}. **9**Their leader was Joel the son of Zichri. Judah the son of Hassenuah was {the official who was} second in command in Jerusalem.

10The priests {who settled in Jerusalem} included Jedaiah the son of Joiarib, and Jachin. **11**Another priest was Seraiah the son of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub. He was in charge of the temple. **12**Another 822 of their associates {settled in Jerusalem and} performed work for the temple. Another priest {who settled in Jerusalem} was Adaiah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of Pashhur, the son of Malkijah. **13**Another 242 of his associates, including the leaders of their ancestral clans, {settled in Jerusalem}. {Another priest who settled there} was Amashsai the son of

Azarel, the son of Ahzai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer. **14**Another 128 of their associates who were strong men {settled in Jerusalem}. Their leader was Zabdiel the son of Haggedolim.

15One of the Levites {who settled in Jerusalem} was Shemaiah the son of Hasshub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni. **16**Two others were Shabbethai and Jozabad, who supervised the work outside the temple and were leaders of the Levites. **17**Another Levite {who settled in Jerusalem} was Mattaniah, who directed the temple choir when they sang the prayers to thank God. He was the son of Mika, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph. His assistant choir director was Bakbukiah. Another Levite was Abda, the son of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun. **18**Altogether, 284 Levites settled in {Jerusalem}, the city set apart {for God}.

19The gatekeepers {who settled in Jerusalem} included Akkub, Talmon, and 172 of their associates who kept watch at the gates.

20The rest of the Israelite people, including the priests and the Levites, all lived on their own property in all the other towns in Judea. **21**The {temple} workers lived on Ophel {Hill in Jerusalem}; and Ziha and Gishpa supervised them.

22The man who supervised the Levites who lived in Jerusalem was Uzzi the son of Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Mika. Uzzi was one of the descendants of Asaph. These were the singers responsible for the music in the temple {services}. **23**Now the king {of Persia} had said {that his kingdom would provide support} for the singers. The king had said to give them whatever they needed to maintain the singing in the temple services. **24**Pethahiah was the {ambassador} to the king {of Persia} for any matter pertaining to the {Israelites}. He was the son of Meshezabel, who was one of the descendants of Zerah, the son of Judah.

25Some of the descendants of Judah did not settle in Jerusalem. They lived in {towns and} villages near their farms. These included {the city of} Kiriath-Arba and its neighboring villages, {the city of} Dibon and its neighboring villages, and {the town of} Jekabzeel and its neighboring villages. **26**{Some descendants of Judah} also {lived} in {the town of} Jeshua, {the town of} Moladah, {the town of} Beth-Pelet, **27**{the town of} Hazar-Shual, and {the city of} Beersheba and its neighboring villages. **28**{Some} also {lived} in {the town of} Ziklag, {the town of} Mekonah and its neighboring villages, **29**{the town of} En-Rimmon, {the town of} Zora, {the town of} Jarmuth, **30**{the towns of} Zanoah and Adullam and the nearby villages, {the city of} Lachish and the nearby farms, and {the town of} Azekah and the nearby villages.

{All of} those people settled {in the territory of Judah, in the area} between Beersheba {in the south} and the Valley of Hinnom {in the north}. **31**Some people who were descendants of Benjamin {settled in these cities and towns}: Geba, Michmas, Aija, Bethel and its neighboring villages, **32**Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah, **33**Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim, **34**Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat, **35**Lod, and Ono the Valley of Craftsmen. **36**Some Levites who had previously lived in {the territory of} Judah {went and settled} in {the land that had belonged to the old tribe of} Benjamin.

Chapter 12

1These are {the names of} the priests and Levites who returned {from Babylonia} with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and with Joshua {the Supreme Priest}. The priests included Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, **2**Amariah, Malluk, Hattush, **3**Shecaniah, Rehum, Meremoth, **4**Iddo, Ginnethoi, Abijah, **5**Mijamin, Maadiah, Bilgah, **6**Shemaiah, and Joiarib, Jedaiah, **7**Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, and Jedaiah.

All those men were leaders of the priests, their associates, during the time when Joshua {was the Supreme Priest}.

8The Levites {who returned} included Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah. Mattaniah and his associates led {the people in singing songs} to thank {God}. **9**Their associates Bakbukiah and Unni {stood} opposite them during the worship services {and led a choir that sang responses}. **10**Joshua {the Supreme Priest} was the

father of Joiakim. Joiakim was the father of Eliashib. Eliashib was the father of Joiada. **11**Joiada was the father of Jonathan. Jonathan was the father of Jaddua.

12When Joiakim was {the Supreme Priest}, these priests were the leaders of their clans. Meraiah was the leader of the clan of Seraiah. Hananiah was the leader of the clan of Jeremiah. **13**Meshullam was {the leader of the clan} of Ezra.

Jehohanan was {the leader of the clan} of Amariah.

14Jonathan was {the leader of the clan} of Malluchi. Joseph was {the leader of the clan} of Shecaniah. **15**Adna was {the leader of the clan} of Harim. Helkai was {the leader of the clan} of Meraioth. **16**Zechariah was {the leader of the clan} of Iddo. Meshullam was {the leader of the clan} of Ginnethon. **17**Zichri was {the leader of the clan} of Abijah. Piltai was {the leader of the clan} of Miniamin and {the clan} of Moadiah. **18**Shammua was {the leader of the clan} of Bilgah. Jehonathan was {the leader of the clan} of Shemaiah. **19**Mattenai was {the leader of the clan} of Joiarib. Uzzi was {the leader of the clan} of Jedaiah. **20**Kallai was the {leader of the clan} of Sallai.

Eber was {the leader of the clan} of Amok.

21Hashabiah was {the leader of the clan} of Hilkiah. Nethanel was {the leader of the clan} of Jedaiah.

22{Some scribes} wrote down {the names of} the clan leaders of the Levites during the time when Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua were {Supreme Priests}. They wrote down {the names of} the clan leaders of the priests when Darius was king of Persia.

23{Scribes} recorded {the names of} the clan leaders of the Levites in their record books up until the time when Johanan the descendant of Eliashib was {the Supreme Priest}. **24**Hashabiah, Serebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel were Levite leaders {who directed one choir}. Their associates {stood} opposite them {directing another choir}. The singers praised {God} and gave thanks {to him}, with one group facing the other. This was what King David, the man who served God faithfully, had instructed. **25**Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, and Akkub were gatekeepers. They {stood} guard at the storerooms near the gates. **26**They did that {work} during the time when Joiakim, the son of Jeshua and grandson of Jozadak, was {the Supreme Priest}. They did it {again} during the time when Nehemiah {served} as governor and Ezra {served} as priest and scribe.

27When {we} dedicated the wall around Jerusalem, we summoned the Levites from all the places {where} they were {living}. We brought them to Jerusalem to assist in dedicating the wall by rejoicing and giving thanks and by singing {accompanied by} cymbals and harps and other stringed instruments. **28**We summoned the Levites who {were used to} singing {together}. They came to Jerusalem from nearby areas where they had settled around the city. They also came from places around {the village of} Netophah {southeast of Jerusalem}. **29**They also came from {three places northeast of} Jerusalem, Beth-Gilgal and the areas around Geba and Azmaveth. {We summoned} those singers because they had built villages to live in near Jerusalem. **30**The priests and Levites performed rituals to make themselves acceptable {to God}. Then they performed {similar} rituals to purify the other people, the gates, and the wall. **31**Then I gathered the leaders of Judah together on top of the wall. I assigned them {to lead} two large groups that would march {around the city} on top of the wall, thanking {God}. {As they faced the city, one group} walked to the right toward the Rubbish Gate. **32**Hoshaiah and half of the leaders of Judah marched behind that group. **33**{The people who marched with that group} included Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, **34**Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, and Jeremiah. **35**Some descendants of the priests {also marched with that group} playing musical instruments. They included Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph. **36**Some associates {of Zechariah} also {marched and played musical instruments}. They included Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani. They all were playing {the same kinds of} musical instruments that King David, the man who served God faithfully, {had told the Levite musicians to play many years previously}. Ezra the scribe {marched} in front of this group. **37**When the people in this group reached the Fountain Gate, they went up the steps that were in front of them to {the area known as} the City of David. Then they went along the top of the wall past the location of the {royal} palace of

David, and then to the Water Gate, on the east {side of the temple}. **38**The other group of those who were {singing and} thanking {Yahweh} marched to the left on top of the wall. I followed them with half of the people. We marched past the Tower of the Ovens to the Broad Wall. **39**From there {we marched} past the Ephraim Gate, the Jeshanah Gate, the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel, and the Tower of the Hundred Soldiers to the Sheep Gate. We finished marching near a gate that {leads into the temple area}. **40**Both of the groups {reached} the temple {as they were singing and} giving thanks. They stood {in their places there}. I was there with the half of the city officials who had come with me. **41**{My group} included the priests Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah. All of them were blowing trumpets. **42**{Others who were blowing trumpets} included Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malkijah, Elam, and Ezer. The singers sang with Jezrahiah who was their leader. **43**The people offered many sacrifices that day. They {all} rejoiced because God had made them very happy. The women and the children rejoiced along with the men, so the sound of the celebration in Jerusalem was so loud that people far away could hear it.

44On that day {we} appointed men to be in charge of the storerooms. That was where {the priests} kept the money and the food and the grain and the tithes. {The people} brought these things from the fields near the cities into the storerooms for the priests and the Levites, as Moses had commanded in the law. {The people of} Judah did all this because they were so happy about the priests and the Levites serving {in the temple}. **45**The priests and the Levites served God by performing rituals to purify things. The singers and the gatekeepers also {did their work} as King David and his son Solomon had declared they should. **46**{We did all this} because that was how it was in the days of old, when David was {king} and Asaph was {in charge of the temple musicians}. There was someone to lead the singers, and they sang songs to praise and thank God. **47**During the time when Zerubbabel was {the governor}, the people all contributed the food that the singers and temple gatekeepers needed each day. They did the same during the time when Nehemiah was {the governor}. They gave a tenth {of their crops} to the Levites, and the Levites gave a tenth {of that} to the priests, who were descendants of Aaron, {the first Supreme Priest}.

Chapter 13

1Then someone read out loud to the people from a scroll {that contained the law that God gave to} Moses. They learned that the {law} said that no one from the Ammonite or Moabite {people groups} should ever join the {Israelite} people {when they gathered together to worship God}. **2**{The law said this} because {the people of Ammon and the people of Moab} did not give any food or water to the Israelites {while they were traveling through their areas after leaving Egypt}. Instead, they paid Balaam to get him to curse the Israelites. But our God turned that attempt to curse Israel into a blessing. **3**So the people obeyed that law. They sent away all the people whose ancestors had come from other countries.

4When he became the {Supreme} Priest, Eliashib got control of the storerooms in the temple. Now he was related to Tobiah. **5**He allowed {Tobiah} to have a large room in which the priests used to store supplies. These included the grain offerings and the incense, the equipment for the temple, and the tithes of grain and wine and olive oil. {God} had commanded {the people to bring} these to the Levites, the singers, and the gatekeepers. This room had also held the offerings for the priests. **6**During that time I was not in Jerusalem, because in the thirty-second year that Artaxerxes was the king of Babylonia, I had gone back {to report to the king what I had been doing}. After I had been there a while, I asked the king to allow me to return {to Jerusalem}.

7When I arrived in Jerusalem, I discovered the evil thing that Eliashib had done for Tobiah by allowing him to use this room in the temple area. **8**That grieved me very much. I threw everything that belonged to Tobiah out of that room. **9**Then I commanded {the priests to perform a ritual to cleanse} that room and make it pure again. I also {ordered} the equipment for the temple and the grain offerings and incense {to be} put back in that room {where they belonged}.

10I also learned that the singers and the other Levites who were responsible for the {temple} services had left Jerusalem. They had returned to their own fields because the people had stopped giving them {10 percent of their} harvests, {since Tobiah had occupied the storeroom}. **11**So I rebuked the city officials. I told them, “You have

neglected {the work of} the temple!" Then I brought {the Levites and the singers} back to the temple and told them to do their work {again}. **12**Then all {the people of} Judah started bringing their tithes of grain, wine, and olive oil to the {temple} storerooms {once again}. **13**I appointed some {men} to be in charge of the storerooms. They were Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and Pedaiah the Levite. I also appointed Hanan the son of Zaccur and grandson of Mattaniah to assist them. I appointed these {men} because {everyone} knew that they were trustworthy and would distribute {the offerings fairly} to their associates.

14"My God, please bless me for this. Yes, bless me for the good things that I have done for your temple and for the temple services!"

15During that time, I saw {some people} in Judea {who were working} on the Sabbath day. Some were pressing grapes to make wine. Others were taking their grain and loading it on donkeys. Others were also loading {bags of} wine, baskets of grapes, figs, and many other things onto donkeys and bringing them into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. I warned them not to sell {food to the people of Judea} on {Sabbath} days. **16**I also saw some people from {the city of} Tyre who were living there in {Jerusalem} bringing fish and other things into Jerusalem to sell to the people of Judah on the Sabbath day. **17**So I rebuked the Jewish leading citizens. I said to them, "This is a very evil thing that you are doing! You are making the Sabbath day into something {God never wanted} it to be. **18**You know that your ancestors did these same things, and God {punished} our nation {by} bringing great trouble to this city! But {now} you too are breaking {the laws} for the Sabbath day. You are going to cause {God} to be angry with {the nation of} Israel {again}. {He will punish us} even more!"

19So I commanded {the gatekeepers} to shut the doors of the gates of the city when it started to get dark on Friday evening. I commanded them not to open the gates until Saturday evening. I also stationed some of my men at the gates {so they would make sure that} no one brought things to sell into {the city in between those times}, on the Sabbath day. **20**One or two times traders and merchants selling all kinds of things camped outside the city on the night {before the Sabbath day}. {They were hoping} to sell {something the next day}. **21**I warned them. I said to them, "It is useless for you to camp here outside the walls on Friday night. If you do this again, I will arrest you by force!" After that, they did not come on Sabbath days.

22I also commanded the Levites to {perform a ritual to} purify themselves and then {take up stations} to guard the city gates. I wanted them to ensure that Sabbath days were kept holy {by not allowing merchants to enter the city on that holy day}.

"My God, please bless me for doing this too! And be kind to me, because your kindness is so great."

23During that time, I also learned that many of the Jewish men had married women from {the city of} Ashdod, and from the Ammonite and Moabite {people groups}. **24**So half of their children spoke a foreign language, and they did not know how to speak Hebrew. They spoke whatever language {their} foreign {parent spoke}. **25**So I rebuked those men. I {asked God} to curse them. I struck some of them {with my fists}. I pulled out their hair. Then I forced them to make a solemn promise, knowing that God was listening. I made them promise that they would {never} again allow their daughters to marry foreign men. I also made them promise that they and their sons would not marry foreign women. **26**{I said to them,} "You know that Solomon, the king of Israel, sinned as a result of {marrying foreign women who worshiped idols}! You know that he was greater than any of the kings of other nations. God loved him, and God set him as the king over all {the people of} Israel. But his foreign wives caused even him to sin! **27**{I am grieved} to hear this about you! You have married foreign wives {who worship idols}. You have commited a great sin against our God!"

28A man who was a son of Joiada and a grandson of Eliashib the Supreme Priest had married the daughter of {our enemy} Sanballat the Horonite. So I forced this man to leave {Jerusalem}.

29"My God, these {men} have brought shame to the priesthood. {They have broken} the covenant of the priesthood and of the Levites. Punish them as they deserve!"

30I took away everything from {the priests} that came from other nations and religions. I also established regulations for the priests and for the Levites {so they would know} what work each of them was supposed to do.

31{I} also {arranged} for the people to bring their offerings of wood at the set times {to burn on the altar}, and to bring the first part of what they harvested {of each crop during the year}.

“My God, please consider that I {have done all these things}, and bless me {for doing them}.”

Esther

Chapter 1

1This {is the story of something that} happened during the time that {a king named} Ahasuerus ruled {the land of Persia}. The empire of this King Ahasuerus had 127 provinces and included all of the territory between India {in the east} and Ethiopia {in the west}. **2**At that time King Ahasuerus was ruling his empire from Susa, the capital city {of Persia}. **3**During the third year that Ahasuerus ruled his empire, he hosted a feast for all of his officials and for every important person who worked for him. He also invited the officers who served in the {combined} army of {the kingdoms of} Persia and Media, the wealthy landowners, and the officials of the provinces. The king was present in person {to host the feast}. **4**Ahasuerus entertained his guests fabulously because he wanted to demonstrate that his empire was extremely wealthy and that he was a very rich and powerful king. {The feast lasted} for six months.

5At the end of those six months, {after that feast was over,} the king hosted a {second} feast. This feast was for all of the people in the royal stronghold in Susa, including both rich and poor. He held this feast in the courtyard of his palace garden. It lasted for a whole week. **6**{In the courtyard,} white and blue curtains were hanging from white and purple cords attached to silver rings on marble pillars. The guests reclined on couches made of gold and silver. These were set on a mosaic floor that was made of red marble, white marble, and pearl bordered with black marble. **7**The attendants served wine in golden cups. {The king was so rich that he had a great many of these cups,} and no two of them were alike. The king had the attendants serve great amounts of his own royal wine to the guests. **8**Ahasuerus gave his guests a special privilege. He made the attendants who served the wine follow this rule: “No one has to drink if they do not want to.” All the guests could drink as little or as much as they wanted. **9**{While the king was entertaining the men in the courtyard,} Queen Vashti, {his wife,} was hosting a feast for the women. She hosted it inside the royal palace where King Ahasuerus lived.

10On the seventh day, when King Ahasuerus was feeling good from drinking wine, he called the seven {castrated} guardians who served him personally. (Their names were Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Karkas.) **11**Queen Vashti was a very beautiful woman. Ahasuerus wanted the people and officials who served in the royal court to see how beautiful she was. So the king told his seven personal servants to bring Queen Vashti to him. He told them to have her wear her royal crown. **12**But when the guardians came and told Queen Vashti what the king had commanded, she refused to come. {The guardians reported this to the king, and} the king became very enraged. **13**It was the habit of the king to consult with certain advisors who knew the law and could make good decisions. So he spoke to those advisors, who knew the right way to do things. **14**The advisors whom the king relied on most were Karshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memukan. These seven officials were from various places in {the kingdoms of} Persia and Media. They advised the king personally. They were the most powerful officials in the empire. **15**The king said to them, “I sent those guardians to Queen Vashti with a command, but she did not obey me. According to the law, what should we do with her?”

16Then Memukan answered the king, {speaking loud enough that} both he and his officials could hear. He said, “Queen Vashti has done wrong, and not only against the king. She has also done wrong against all the officials and people groups in all the provinces that King Ahasuerus rules! **17**This is what will happen. Women all over the empire will hear about what the queen did. They will say, ‘King Ahasuerus commanded his servants to bring Queen Vashti to him, but she did not come! {So if even the queen can disobey the king, why should I have to obey my husband?}’ Then women will stop respecting their husbands. **18**Even today, the leading women of Persia and Media will hear what the queen did. They will start to disobey {their husbands, even though they are} officials of the king. They will treat them with disrespect, and this will make their husbands angry with them. That will be bad enough by itself, {even if the news does not spread any farther}. **19**If it pleases you {to do so}, O king, you should personally issue a royal decree and have scribes add it to the laws of Persia and Media, which no one can change. {This decree should

say} that Vashti can never come into your presence again. Then you should choose a different woman to be your queen, one who will obey you. **20**That way, even though your empire is very large, everyone in it will hear about your decree {and know that if any wife disobeys her husband, he can banish and divorce her just as you did to Vashti.} Then all the women will respect and obey their husbands. This will be true of every husband in the empire."

21This seemed like a good idea to the king and his officials. So King Ahasuerus followed the advice of Memukan. **22**The king sent letters to every province in his empire. He wrote to every province using its own alphabet and to each people group in its own language. The letters said that men should be the masters over their wives and children. They also said that a husband should be able to give orders to his wife in his own native language {and that she should understand and obey}.

Chapter 2

1Some time later, when King Ahasuerus no longer felt so angry, he started to miss Vashti. But when she disobeyed his command, he had made a decree that she could never come into his presence again. **2**So some of the young men who attended the king said to him, "{Your majesty, you should get a new wife} for yourself. You could tell your servants to look for young virgins who are very beautiful. **3**Also, you could assign officers in each province of your empire to bring every virgin who is very beautiful here to your capital city of Susa. They could stay in the harem for virgins under the custody of Hegai, the {castrated} royal guardian who takes care of the young women who live there. He could arrange for them to receive beauty treatments. **4**Then you could decide which young woman you liked the best, and you could make her queen instead of Vashti." The king liked what they suggested, so he did it.

5At that time, there was a Jewish man named Mordecai living in the capital city of Susa. He was from the tribe of Benjamin. His father was named Jair, his grandfather was named Shimei, and his great-grandfather was named Kish. **6**Many years earlier, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had taken Kish away from Jerusalem and brought him to Babylon along with many other captives. Nebuchadnezzar took them away from Jerusalem at the same time that he took King Jeconiah of Judah away from Jerusalem and brought him to Babylon. **7**Now Mordecai was taking care of his cousin, who was an orphan. Her {Hebrew} name was Hadassah, and her {Persian} name was Esther. When her father and mother died, Mordecai had adopted her as his own daughter. Esther was now a young woman, and she was exceptionally attractive.

8And so this is what happened: Messengers went {throughout the empire} and proclaimed the new law that the king had spoken. At the same time, the officers {whom the king had appointed in each province} brought many {beautiful} young women to the capital city of Susa and put them under the custody of Hegai. He was the man who took care of the young women {who lived in the harem for virgins}. {Because Esther was exceptionally attractive,} the officers also brought her to the king's palace and put her under the custody of Hegai. **9**Hegai was very impressed with Esther, and he treated her favorably. He quickly arranged for Esther to receive her beauty treatments and her allotment of food. He also chose seven female servants from the king's palace and assigned them to be her personal attendants. He also moved Esther and her attendants to the best rooms in the harem for virgins. **10**Mordecai had warned Esther that she should not tell anyone what people group she was from. So she did not tell anyone that she was a Jew or who her relatives were. **11**Mordecai wanted to know how Esther was doing and what was happening to her. So each and every day, he would walk around in front of the courtyard of the harem for virgins. That way he could ask people who were going in and out of the harem how she was doing.

12Each young woman in the harem, one at a time, was going to {have sexual relations with} King Ahasuerus {and become one of his concubines}. But before her turn came, each woman received a full year of beauty treatments, using techniques that had been developed for women {in Persia}. This is how the beauty treatments were completed: For the first six months, {a woman's attendants would rub her body every day} with olive oil mixed with myrrh. For the next six months, {her attendants would rub her body every day} with perfumes and lotions designed for women. **13**This is the way that they would prepare a young woman to go {and have sexual relations} with the king {and become one of his concubines}. She could take whatever clothing and jewelry she wanted from the harem for virgins and wear them when she went to the king's palace. **14**The king's servants would bring her {to the king's private rooms} in the evening. The next morning, they would bring her to the other harem, the one for

concubines. There a man named Shaashgaz would take charge of her, because he was the {castrated} royal guardian who took care of the concubines. {The young woman would live there for the rest of her life.} She would not go and see the king again unless he asked for her by name because he had enjoyed being with her.

15Eventually, {the evening came when} it was the turn for Esther, whom Mordecai had adopted as his daughter, to go to the king. She was the daughter of Abihail, Mordecai's uncle. When Esther went to the king, she only asked for what Hegai, the royal guardian in charge of the harem for virgins, recommended that she should wear. Everyone who saw Esther was very impressed with her. **16**The king's servants brought Esther to King Ahasuerus in his royal palace during the tenth month of the year (the month of Tebeth), in the seventh year of his reign {as king of Persia}. **17**The king loved Esther more than any of the other women. He treated her more kindly and more favorably than any of the other young women {who had become his concubines}. So King Ahasuerus put a royal crown on her head, and he made her the queen instead of Vashti. **18**Then the king hosted a great feast and invited all of his officials and servants. It was a feast to celebrate Esther {becoming the queen}. He proclaimed that this would be a time to celebrate for people in all of the provinces of his empire {when they would not have to pay taxes}, and he generously gave gifts {to people}.

19{Later,} Ahasuerus had his officers bring more virgins {to Susa}. During this time, Mordecai {was working for the king, and he} sat at the king's gate. **20**Esther had still not told anyone what people group she was from, because Mordecai had warned her not to tell anyone. In fact, she continued to follow all of Mordecai's instructions, just as she had done when she was growing up in his house. **21**During that time, when Mordecai was {doing his work} at the king's gate, two of the king's guards who protected the doorway {to the king's private rooms} became angry {with the king}. They planned to assassinate King Ahasuerus. Their names were Bigthan and Teresh. **22**But Mordecai found out about what they were planning. He told Queen Esther about it, and she told the king. She explained that Mordecai had given her the information. **23**So the king's officials investigated Mordecai's report and discovered that it was true. So the king ordered his servants to hang those two men from wooden poles {until they died}. In the king's presence, the king's scribes recorded an account of this in the royal chronicles.

Chapter 3

1Some time later, King Ahasuerus promoted {one of his officials,} Haman, the son of Hammedatha, who was a descendant of Agag. The king gave Haman a very important position, more important than any of his other officials. **2**The king {wanted to show that he had given Haman an important position. So he} commanded all of his other servants who were at the king's gate to bow down all the way to the ground to honor Haman {whenever he walked by}. But Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman, {because as a Jew he would not worship anyone except Yahweh}. **3**The other servants at the king's gate {saw that Mordecai refused to bow down, and they} asked him, "Why are you disobeying the king's command?" **4**Mordecai told them that he was a Jew, {and that Jews only worship Yahweh}. The other servants warned Mordecai every day {that he would be punished severely if he kept disobeying the king and not honoring his most important official}. But Mordecai still refused to bow down. So they told Haman about it to see if he would allow Mordecai to keep refusing to bow down {because he was a Jew}. **5**When Haman saw that Mordecai would not bow down to him, he became furious. **6**The other servants told Haman that {Mordecai was not bowing down to him because} Mordecai was a Jew. So Haman decided it would not be enough just to kill Mordecai alone. Haman decided that he would try to kill all the Jews in the entire empire of Ahasuerus.

7So Haman had his servants cast a Pur (that is, a lot) while he watched {to determine the best month and the best day of the month to kill the Jews}. They did that in the first month, the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year that Ahasuerus reigned {as king of Persia}. The lot selected the twelfth month of that year, the month of Adar, {as the time for Haman to carry out his plan}. **8**Then Haman went to King Ahasuerus and said, "Your Majesty, there is a certain group of people who live among the other peoples in your empire. They are in every province. They have their own set of laws, and so they do not obey your laws. It is not good for you to allow them to live in your empire. **9**If you approve of this plan, O king, then write a decree saying that all of the Jews must die. {When they are dead, we can take all of their goods, and from that} I will give 300 tons of silver to your administrators for them to put into your royal treasuries." **10**The king {liked what Haman said. So he} gave Haman the ring that he wore that had

his official seal on it. {With that, Haman could make laws as if he were the king himself.} Haman, the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, had become the enemy of the Jews. **11**The king told Haman, “You can keep the money for yourself, and you can do whatever you want to do with those people.”

12On the thirteenth day of the first month of that same year, Haman called in the royal scribes, and he dictated a letter to them. He told them to send copies to the royal officials, the governors of each province, and the leaders of each people group. The scribes translated the letter so it could be sent to each province using its own alphabet and to each people group in its own language. To show that he was sending the letter under the king’s own authority, Haman sealed each copy of the letter with the ring that had the king’s official seal on it. **13**Couriers delivered the letters to the officials in every province in the empire. The letters said to completely destroy all the Jews, including the children and women, on a single day. That was to be the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, {in that same year}. The letters also said that those who killed the Jews could take everything that belonged to them. **14**The letter told the officials to post copies where everyone could see them. That way all the people in every single province would know that the king had commanded this, and they would get ready {to do what the letter said to do} when the day came. **15**As the king had commanded, couriers rushed {with the letters to every province in the empire}. A herald also proclaimed what the letter said in the capital city of Susa. The king and Haman relaxed and drank together. But everyone who lived in Susa was very upset {about what was going to happen}.

Chapter 4

1When Mordecai found out about Haman’s plan {to kill all the Jews, as signs of grief} he tore his clothes and put on rough sackcloth and threw ashes over himself. Then he started walking towards the city center, {towards the king’s palace}, crying out in anguish. **2**But no one who was wearing sackcloth was allowed inside the king’s gate. So when Mordecai reached the gate, he had to stay just outside of it. **3**In every province of the empire, the letter that said to destroy the Jews {was announced in public. When} the Jews {heard about it, they} mourned greatly. They went without food and wailed loudly. Many of them also put on sackcloth and threw ashes on themselves and lay on the ground. **4**Esther’s female attendants came with her guardians and told her {that Mordecai was sitting outside the gate wearing sackcloth. When she heard about this,} Queen Esther herself became very afraid. She sent Mordecai some good clothes to wear instead of the sackcloth, but he refused to put them on.

5The king had assigned some of the royal guardians to Esther personally. So Esther called for one of them, a man named Hathak. She told him to go out and speak with Mordecai and find out why he was so distressed {that he was sitting at the king’s gate wearing sackcloth}. **6**So Hathak went out to {speak with} Mordecai, who was in the plaza in front of the king’s gate. **7**Mordecai told Hathak everything that Haman was planning to do {to the Jews}. He even told him how much money Haman said the king would get for his treasuries {if the king commanded people} to kill all of the Jews. **8**Mordecai also gave Hathak a copy of the letter that the heralds had read out loud in Susa and that said that people must kill all of the Jews. He told Hathak to show the letter to Esther so that she would know exactly what it said. He also told him to urge her to go to the king personally and to beg him desperately to save her people from destruction. **9**So Hathak returned to Esther and told her what Mordecai had said.

10Then Esther told Hathak to go back to Mordecai with this message: **11**“There is a law {about going to the king} that applies to {everyone in the kingdom}, both men and women. If anyone goes into the inner courtyard of the palace, {where the king can see them}, and the king has not summoned them, that person will die. Only if the king holds out his golden scepter to them, then they will live. Everyone in the whole empire knows this law. {So I cannot go and speak to the king as you have requested.} The king has not called for me in over a month, {and if I go without being summoned, I could be put to death}.” **12**So {Hathak} went back to Mordecai and told him what Esther had said.

13Mordecai told {Hathak} to tell this to Esther: “Do not imagine that just because you live there in the king’s palace that you will be safe when they kill all the other Jews. **14**If you say nothing at all now, someone from some other place will rescue the Jews, but you and your relatives will not survive. Who knows, perhaps it was for just such a time as this that you became queen.” **15**{After Hathak told this to} Esther, she told him to go back to Mordecai and

say this to him: **16**"Gather together all the Jews who live here in Susa and tell them to fast and pray for my sake. Tell them to not eat or drink anything for three days and three nights. My female attendants and I will also fast in the same way. At the end of the three days, I will go to {talk to} the king, even though doing that is against the law. I will do that even if it costs me my life." **17**So {after Hathach told this to} Mordecai, he went and did everything that Esther had told him to do.

Chapter 5

1Three days later, Esther {and her servants prepared a grand banquet. Then she} put on her royal robes, and she {went and} stood in the inner courtyard of the palace, across from the king's house. He was in the royal palace, sitting on the royal throne and facing the entrance of the room. **2**As soon as the king noticed Queen Esther standing there in the courtyard, he was very pleased to see her. So he held out his golden scepter to her, {to show that she could safely approach him}. So Esther came up {to the throne} and touched the top of the scepter.

3Then the king asked her, "Why have you come here, Queen Esther? What do you want? {Tell me, and} I will give you anything you ask for, no matter how great it is." **4**Esther replied, "If it pleases you, O king, please come with Haman today to the banquet that I have prepared for you." **5**The king said to his servants, "{Go and} get Haman and bring him quickly so that we can do what Esther has asked us to do!" So the king and Haman went to the banquet that Esther {and her servants} had prepared {for them}.

6While they were drinking wine, the king said to Esther, "Now please tell me what you {really} want. I will give you anything {you ask for}, no matter how great it is. I truly mean what I am saying." **7**Esther answered, "This is what I {really} want: **8**if you are pleased with me, and if you are pleased, O king, to give me what I want, please come with Haman to {another} banquet that I will prepare for you tomorrow. I will answer your question then."

9Haman was feeling very happy as he left {the banquet that day}. But then he saw Mordecai sitting at the king's gate. Mordecai did not stand up to show respect for Haman or tremble fearfully in front of him. This made Haman furious with Mordecai. **10**But {even though} Haman {was so angry, he} kept himself from showing that he was angry. {Instead,} he went home and gathered together his friends with his wife Zeresh, **11**and he boasted to them about how rich he was and about how many sons he had. {He} also {boasted} about how the king had promoted him many times and given him a position above all of his other officials and administrators. **12**Then Haman added, "And that is not all! I was the only one Queen Esther invited to come with the king to a banquet that she prepared {for us today}. And she has also invited only me {to attend another banquet} with the king tomorrow." **13**Then Haman said, "But I still cannot be happy as long as I keep seeing that Jew, Mordecai, sitting there at the king's gate {and refusing to honor me}." **14**So Haman's wife Zeresh and his friends who were there suggested, "Have your servants set up a pole 25 meters high. Then tomorrow morning speak to the king and tell him that you want to hang Mordecai on it. Then {once you have executed Mordecai,} you can go to the banquet with the king in a good mood." Haman thought that this was a good plan, so he {told his servants to} set up the pole.

Chapter 6

1That night the king was unable to sleep. So he told {the young men who attended him} to bring in the royal chronicles. One {of the young men got the chronicles and} began to read them out loud to the king. **2**The chronicles said that Bigthan and Teresh, two of the royal guardians who protected the doorway {to the king's private quarters}, had planned to assassinate King Ahasuerus. The chronicles also said that Mordecai {had discovered their plot and} had let the king know about it. {By doing that, Mordecai saved the king's life.}

3Then the king asked, "In what great way did I honor Mordecai for saving my life?" The young men who attended him replied, "No one did anything for him." **4**At that moment, Haman entered the outer courtyard of the king's house. He had come to tell the king that he wanted to hang Mordecai on the pole that he had set up for Mordecai.

The king {wanted to consult someone about the best way to honor Mordecai, so he} asked, “Who is out in the courtyard?” **5**The young men replied, “O king, Haman is standing in the courtyard.” The king said, “Bring him in.”

6When Haman came in, the king asked him, “What should I do for the man whom I would really like to honor?” Haman thought to himself, “Certainly I am the person whom the king would like to honor more than anyone else!” **7**Haman replied to the king, “If you really want to honor someone, **8**tell your servants to bring one of your own royal robes that you have already worn yourself. Have them also bring a horse that you have already ridden yourself and put a royal crown on its head {to show that it belongs to you}. **9**Then, {on your behalf,} have one of your most noble officials present the man with the robe and the horse. Have your servants clothe the man whom you really want to honor {with the robe}. Have them seat that man on the horse and then lead the horse through the public square of the city. Have them shout out {to everyone} in front of them, ‘The king is doing this because he really wants to honor this man!’” **10**The king {liked this plan, so he} replied to Haman, “Go quickly! Take the robe and the horse and do what you have just described for Mordecai the Jew. He {is one of my servants who} sits by the gate to the palace. Make sure that you do absolutely everything that you have said.”

11So Haman {did what the king commanded. He} got the robe and the horse. He put the robe on Mordecai, seated him on the horse, and then led the horse through the public square of the city. As he did, he shouted out to everyone in front of him, “The king is doing this because he really wants to honor this man!” **12**Then Mordecai went back to {his place at} the king’s gate. But Haman hurried to his house, covering {his} head {because he felt so} humiliated. **13**Haman {gathered} all his friends {together once again. He} told them and his wife Zeresh everything that had happened to him {that day. Some of his friends were also} his advisors{, and they} and his wife Zeresh told him, “Mordecai has begun to defeat you. Since he is one of the Jewish people, you will not win against him. Instead, he will certainly defeat you.” **14**While they were still talking together, {some of} the royal guardians arrived to bring Haman quickly to the banquet that Esther {and her servants} had prepared.

Chapter 7

1So the king and Haman went to the {second} banquet that Queen Esther {had arranged for them}. **2**At that second banquet, while they were drinking wine, the king asked Esther again, “Now please tell me what you really want, Queen Esther. {Tell me,} and I will do it for you. {I will give you} anything you ask for, no matter how great it is.” **3**Then Queen Esther replied, “If you are pleased with me, O king, I hope you will be willing to do what I ask. Please allow me to live, and please save my people. That is what I am asking for. **4**{I am appealing to you} because someone has turned my people and me over {to our enemies}, and they are going to destroy us completely. If someone had sold the men and {even} the women to be slaves, I would not have said anything about that to you, because that would not have been important enough to bother you, the king, with that.”

5Then King Ahasuerus responded to Queen Esther, “Who has done this? Where is the man who has dared to do such a thing?” **6**Esther responded, “The man who is our bitter enemy is this evil man Haman!” This made Haman terrified to be in the presence of the king and the queen. **7**The king became so angry that he got up and left the banquet of wine. He went {outside} into the palace garden {to decide what to do}. But Haman stayed {inside} to beg Queen Esther to save his life because he recognized that the king wanted to execute him. **8**{As he was pleading for his life,} Haman knelt down very close to Esther as she was {reclining} on a {banqueting} couch. When the king returned from the palace garden to the room where they had been drinking wine, {he saw this}. The king exclaimed, “He is even trying to rape the queen in my presence and in my own house!” As soon as the king said this, {some of his servants} covered Haman’s face {as a sign that he would be executed}.

9Then Harbona, who was one of the guardians who served the king personally, said, “O king! Haman has also set up a pole twenty-five meters high at his house because he wants to hang Mordecai on it. But Mordecai saved your life.” The king said, “Hang Haman on it!” **10**So they hung Haman on the pole that he had set up for Mordecai. Then the king stopped being so angry.

Chapter 8

1That same day, King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther all the property that had belonged to Haman. He had been the enemy of the Jews. Esther told the king that Mordecai was {her cousin and that he had been like a father} to her. When he learned that, {the king summoned} Mordecai to come to him. **2**{When the king sentenced Haman to death,} the king took back from Haman the ring that had the king's official seal on it {and the king was wearing it again.} The king now took the ring off and gave it to Mordecai, {to show that Mordecai would have the power to act with the king's authority.} Esther also put Mordecai in charge of all the property that had belonged to Haman.

3Then Esther came to speak to the king again. {To show him how desperately she was pleading,} Esther knelt down and put her face right on top of his feet. She cried as she begged him to stop the terrible plan of Haman the Agagite to destroy the Jews. **4**The king held out his golden scepter toward Esther, so she got up {off the floor} and stood facing the king. **5**Then Esther said, "Your majesty, if you think that it is the right thing to do, and if you are pleased with me, please write a new letter revoking the letters that Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, sent out. His letters said to destroy all the Jews everywhere in your empire. **6**{I am asking this} because I cannot bear to see the terrible thing that is about to happen to my people. They are my kindred. I cannot bear to see people destroy them."

7King Ahasuerus replied to Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew, "As you know, I have given to Esther all the property that belonged to Haman, and I had my servants hang Haman on a wooden pole because he wanted to kill all the Jews. **8**{You also know that} no one can revoke a letter that has my name and my official seal on it, {such as the letter that Haman wrote}. So this is what you should do. Write {a new letter} to help the Jews, as you think best. {I give you permission to} put my name on it and to seal {the letter} with the ring that has my official seal on it."

9So the king sent for his scribes. {They came and} they wrote a letter saying everything that Mordecai told them {to write}. {They wrote this letter} on the twenty-third day of the third month, the month of Sivan, {in the twelfth year that Ahasuerus reigned as king of Persia}. The letter addressed the Jews {in the empire}, but they also sent {copies of the letter} to the royal officials, and to the governors and leaders in each province. The empire {of Ahasuerus} had 127 provinces, extending all the way from India {in the east} to Ethiopia {in the west}. The scribes wrote to {people in} every province using its own alphabet and to each people group in its own language. They wrote {especially} to the Jews, in their alphabet and in their own language. **10**Mordecai signed {each copy of the letter} with the name of King Ahasuerus, and he sealed {each one} with the ring that had the king's official seal on it. Couriers on horseback delivered the letters. They rode fast horses that were only for the king's service. These horses were born in the king's own stables. **11**{Each copy of the letter said} that the king permits the Jews throughout the empire to join together and to fight to protect themselves. {The king's letter} also {permits them} to completely destroy any group of armed men from any people or province who would attack them. {The letter} also {permits them} to kill the women and children {of those who would attack them}, and to take the possessions of the people {whom they kill}. **12**{The letter permitted all the Jews} in every province throughout the empire {to do this} on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, {in that same year}. **13**{The letter told the officials} in every single province to display copies of the letter where everyone could see them so that people would know that the king had commanded this, and so that the Jews would be ready to fight back against their enemies when the day came. **14**The king commanded the couriers to deliver the letters as quickly as possible. {He sent them out} on his own fast horses. The king's officials also proclaimed the new law {and displayed copies of the letter} in the capital city of Susa.

15The king gave Mordecai {special things to wear to show that he was now his most important official. He gave him} a blue and white royal garment, a large golden crown, and a purple robe made of fine linen. Mordecai put these on and left the palace. {When} the people of Susa {saw him, they} shouted joyfully. **16**The Jews in Susa were very happy, and other people honored them. **17**In every single province and in every single city, wherever {the couriers} brought the letter announcing the king's decree, the Jews rejoiced greatly and had big celebrations. Many people from other groups in the empire became very afraid of the Jews, so they became Jews themselves.

Chapter 9

1On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month {of that year}, the month of Adar, it was time for everyone to do what the letters from the king said that he had decreed for them to do. The enemies of the Jews had expected to destroy the Jews on that day. But just the opposite happened. Instead, it was the Jews who destroyed their enemies. **2**Throughout the empire, the Jews joined together in their cities to defend themselves against those who wanted to harm them. No one was able to fight back against them because everyone in the empire had become very afraid of them, {so no one helped anyone who attacked the Jews}. **3**All the leaders in each province, the royal officials, the governors, and everyone who worked for the king helped the Jews because they had become very afraid of Mordecai. **4**They were afraid of Mordecai because he was a very important royal official. Throughout the empire, everyone was hearing about how great he was because Mordecai kept becoming more and more powerful.

5{On the day when they were allowed to defend themselves}, the Jews took their weapons and fought against all of their enemies. The Jews destroyed them completely. They were able to do everything that they wanted to do against their enemies. **6**In the capital city of Susa the Jews killed 500 men. **7**{The Jews} also {killed the ten sons of Haman. The names of his sons were} Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, **8**Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, **9**Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vaizatha. **10**These were the ten sons of Haman son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews. The Jews killed them, but they did not take the things that belonged to them. **11**At the end of the day, someone came in and reported to the king how many people the Jews had killed in the capital city of Susa.

12So the king said to Queen Esther, “Here in the capital city of Susa the Jews have killed 500 men, including the ten sons of Haman. In the rest of my empire, they must have killed many more than that! So, what else do you want? Tell me, and I will do it for you. I will do whatever you ask, so please tell me what you want.” **13**Esther replied, “If it seems like a good plan to you, O king, then please allow the Jews who {live here} in Susa to do again tomorrow what you allowed them to do today. Also, command {your servants} to hang {the bodies of} Haman’s ten sons on wooden poles.” **14**The king did as {Esther} asked. He issued a decree {allowing the Jews} in Susa {to fight against their enemies again the next day}, and {he ordered his servants} to hang {the bodies of} Haman’s ten sons. **15**And so on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar, the Jews who {lived} in Susa joined together again and killed 300 {more} men in Susa. But {once again} they did not take the things that belonged to those men.

16The Jews who {lived} in the other parts of the empire, who had joined together to fight for their lives {on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar}, had defeated their enemies and killed 75,000 of them {on that day}. But they did not take the things that had belonged to their enemies. **17**{After defeating their enemies} on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, they rested on the fourteenth day. They devoted the fourteenth day as a day to celebrate joyfully. **18**But the Jews who {lived} in Susa joined together {to fight against their enemies} on both the thirteenth and fourteenth days of the month {of Adar}. They rested on the fifteenth day. They devoted that day to celebrating joyfully. **19**That is why the Jews who live in rural villages observe this holiday on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar {rather than on the fifteenth day}. They do this by celebrating joyfully and by giving gifts to one another.

20Mordecai wrote down everything that had happened. Then he sent letters to all the Jews throughout the empire, everywhere that they lived. **21**He established {a holiday on} the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar. He told the Jews to observe it every single year **22**because those were the days when the Jews rested and no longer had to fight their enemies. That was the month when everything had changed for them. They had been deeply distressed {because their enemies were going to destroy them}. But then they became very happy {after they were safe from all their enemies}. {So Mordecai told them} to observe those days with joyful celebration and by giving gifts to one another. {Mordecai} also {told them that} they should help the poor on those days. **23**The Jews were already celebrating those days that way. So they {readily} agreed to do what Mordecai had instructed them to do.

24{They would celebrate those days to remember} how Haman, the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had tried to destroy them. He had thrown a Pur (that is, a lot) {to find out what would be the best day} to attack the Jews and destroy them completely. **25**{They would also remember how Esther dared to} come before the king {even though he did not summon her}. Then the king {allowed Mordecai to} send a letter {throughout the empire} saying that the king would make Haman’s evil plan to destroy the Jews happen to Haman instead. The king

also ordered his servants to hang Haman on a wooden pole. When the Jews in Susa killed his ten sons, the king had his servants hang their bodies, as well. **26**The {Persian} word {for “lot”} is “Pur.” That is why {the Jews} gave the name Purim to this celebration. Because of all of the amazing things that they had just experienced and because {Mordecai then} wrote {to them to tell them to observe this holiday}, **27**the Jews agreed to establish those two days as holidays and to observe them in the way that {Mordecai} had told them, on those specific days. They agreed that they and their descendants and everyone who became part of the Jewish people {would celebrate this festival of Purim} every year, forever. **28**So that is why every Jewish family in every generation {since} has celebrated these days as holidays, everywhere they have lived. The Jewish community and its descendants will always faithfully observe this festival of Purim.

29Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, with {help from} Mordecai the Jew, wrote a second letter about Purim. Because Esther was the queen, she was able to command the Jews to obey {what Mordecai had written} about Purim {in his letter}. **30**They sent {copies of this second} letter to all the Jews throughout the entire empire of Ahasuerus. It encouraged them that {their situation was now} peaceful and secure. **31**{In this second letter,} Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther confirmed that Purim should be celebrated on the {fourteenth and fifteenth} days {of the month of Adar}. {They also confirmed} that the Jews should continue the times of fasting and mourning that the Jews had established for themselves and their descendants. **32**Esther issued a decree establishing Purim {as a holiday for the Jews}, and the {royal scribes} wrote it down in the book {of laws}.

Chapter 10

1Then King Ahasuerus imposed a tax {on everyone} throughout his empire, even {on those living} on the islands of the {Mediterranean} Sea. **2**{The king’s scribes} made a record in the royal chronicles of Media and Persia of all the great things that King Ahasuerus accomplished because he was so powerful. {They} also {wrote} there in a complete way the great {things that} Mordecai {did} because the king had promoted him to a very important position. **3**Mordecai the Jew was able to do so much because he was the most powerful person in the empire after King Ahasuerus. He was also a leader among his own people. All of his fellow Jews respected him. He worked {hard} to make sure that the Jews would always prosper.

Job

Chapter 1

1In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. He was a man of complete integrity. He respected God and so he avoided doing evil things. **2**Now Job had seven sons and three daughters. **3**He owned 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 1,000 oxen, and 500 donkeys. He also had many servants. Job was richer than anyone else who lived in the area east of the Jordan River.

4Job's sons often held feasts in their homes. Whenever any of them held a feast, he would invite all of his brothers and sisters to share the meal with him. **5**After all of the sons had each held a feast, Job would gather his children together. He would ask Yahweh to cleanse them from any action they might have committed during their feasting that would have made them unacceptable to him. He would get up early in the morning, kill animals, and burn them on the altar {as sacrifices}, one for each {of his children}. {For} Job {always said}, "Perhaps my children have sinned by saying something evil about God in their thoughts. {If they have, I need to ask God to forgive them.}" Job did this after each time his sons had all hosted feasts.

6One day the angels came and gathered together in front of Yahweh, and Satan came too. **7**Yahweh asked Satan, "Where have you just come from?"

Satan replied, "I have come from the earth, where I was traveling around {to see what was happening}."

8Yahweh said to Satan, "Have you noticed Job, who worships me? I mention him because no one else on earth has such complete integrity as he does. He respects me and so he refuses to do anything evil." **9**Satan replied to Yahweh, "Job only worships you because of what you have done for him. **10**You have always protected him, his family, and everything he owns. You make him succeed in whatever work he does. As a result, he has built very large herds of livestock. **11**But if you attack what he owns and take it away, he will certainly curse you in front of everyone."

12Yahweh replied to Satan, "All right, I permit you to take away everything that he has. But do not harm him in his own body."

Satan {agreed and then} left Yahweh {in order to carry out his attack on Job}.

13One day after that, Job's sons and daughters were attending a feast at the home of the oldest brother. **14**{While they were doing that,} a messenger arrived at Job's home. He told Job, "Your oxen were plowing the fields and your donkeys were grazing nearby. **15**But a group of men from the Sheba people group came and attacked us. They killed all of your servants who were working in the fields. They took away all the oxen and donkeys! I am the only one who has escaped to come and tell you what happened."

16While he was still talking to Job, another messenger arrived. He said to Job, "Lightning from the sky struck and killed all the sheep and all the men who were taking care of them! I am the only one who has escaped to come and tell you what happened."

17While he was still talking to Job, a third messenger arrived. He said to Job, "Three groups of robbers from the region of Chaldea came and attacked us. They stole all the camels and killed all the men who were taking care of them. I am the only one who has escaped to come and tell you what happened."

18While he was still talking to Job, a fourth messenger arrived. He said to Job: "Your sons and daughters were feasting in the home of their oldest brother. **19**Suddenly a very strong wind came from the desert and struck the house. The house collapsed on your sons and daughters and killed them all! I am the only one who has escaped to come and tell you what happened."

20Then Job stood up and tore his robe and shaved his head {because he was very sad}. Then he lay down on the ground to worship God. **21**He said,

“When I was born, I was wearing no clothes.

When I die, I will not take any clothes with me.

It is Yahweh who gave me everything that I possessed,

and it is Yahweh who has taken it all away.

I find no fault with Yahweh.

22So in spite of all the things that had happened to him, Job did not sin by saying that what God had done was wrong.

Chapter 2

1On another day, the angels came again and gathered together in front of Yahweh. Satan also came again.
2Yahweh asked Satan, “Where have you come from {this time}?” Satan replied, “I have come from the earth, where I was traveling around {to see what was happening}.”

3Yahweh asked Satan, “Have you noticed that Job continues to worship me? I mention him again because no one else on earth has such complete integrity as he does. He respects me, and so he refuses to do anything evil. He still does this even though you persuaded me to {permit you to} attack him for no reason.”

4Satan replied to Yahweh, “Job still worships you because he is glad you destroyed his herds and family rather than destroying him. People will give up everything they have in order to save their own lives. **5**But if you harm his body, he will certainly curse you in front of everyone!”

6Yahweh replied to Satan, “All right, I permit you to harm his body. But you must leave him alive.”

7Satan {agreed and he} left. He went and caused Job to suffer from very painful boils all over his body. **8**Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped the boils on his skin. He sat down in a pile of ashes {outside the city}.

9His wife said to him, “You should not still be loyal to God! You should curse God and then go ahead and die.”

10But Job replied, “You are talking the way people talk who do not know God. We should be willing to receive whatever God sends us.” So in spite of all the things that had happened to him, Job did not sin by saying that what God had done was wrong.

11Job had some good and wise friends. One of them was Eliphaz from the town of Teman. Another was Bildad from the Shuhite people group. A third friend was Zophar from the town of Naamah. These men heard about the terrible things that had happened to Job. So they each left their homes and went together to visit Job to comfort him sincerely. **12**But when they saw Job from a distance, they almost did not recognize him. They wailed loudly, they all tore their clothing, and they threw dust into the air that settled on their heads. {They did these things to demonstrate how sorry they were for Job.} **13**Then they sat on the ground with Job for seven days. {During that time} none of them said anything to him, out of respect for how greatly he was suffering.

Chapter 3

1At the end of those seven days, Job started speaking. He cursed the day when he was born. **2**He said,

3“I wish that the day of my birth had never existed!

{I feel the same way about} the night when my mother conceived me.

4I wish that there would only be darkness on that day {so that it would not even be a day}.

I wish that God in heaven would not care about that day

and so not make the sun shine on it.

5I wish that that day were only darkness,

with clouds blocking out the sunlight

and many other things also making it very dark.

6I wish that the moon and stars would not shine on the night when my mother conceived me.

I wish that the day of my birth was not part of any month.

Indeed, I wish that it was not a day in the year at all.

7I mean it—I wish that no mother would ever again bear a child on that date.

I wish that no one would ever again rejoice {over a child's birth} on that date.

8There are magicians who know how to agitate the chaos monster. I want them to curse the day of my birth!

9I wish that the stars that shone early in the morning of that day would never shine again.

I wish that it would never become light on that day.

I wish that not even the first rays of the rising sun would appear on that day.

10I wish that day did not exist, because my mother gave birth to me on that day,

and because I became alive, I have now experienced all these terrible things.

11I wish that I had died right after my mother gave birth to me!

I wish I had stopped breathing after being alive for only a short time!

12I wish that my mother had never held me on her lap and nursed me!

13If I had died shortly after my mother gave birth to me,

I would now be resting peacefully among all the other people who had died.

14{I would be resting} with great kings and their advisers.

They built beautiful tombs on spacious grounds {and are now resting in them}.

15Or {I would be resting} with princes

who owned great quantities of gold and silver.

16I wish that I had died in my mother's womb

and never lived for even a moment.

Then people would have buried me privately.

17After wicked people die, they do not cause any more trouble.

That allows the people whom they were oppressing to rest.

18Those who were prisoners all rest peacefully {after they die}.

They no longer have slave drivers ordering them around.

19Everyone, whether rich or poor, goes to the realm of the dead.

Those who were slaves no longer have to obey their masters.

20God should not allow those who are suffering greatly like me to continue to remain alive!

God should not allow those who are very miserable to live!

21They long to die, but they do not die.

They desire to die more than people desire to find buried treasure.

22{God should not give life in the first place} to people who are very happy when they finally die!

23God should not give life to people if he is going to keep them from knowing what to do

or from understanding what is really happening to them!

24I am wishing that I were dead because now I cry so much that I cannot eat.

I just keep groaning loudly.

25There were things that I always worried might happen to me.

Those things have now happened!

26I really have no peace of mind at all.

My troubles keep disturbing me."

Chapter 4

1Then Eliphaz, Job's friend from the town of Teman, replied to what Job had said. Eliphaz said,

2"Will you please allow me to say something to you?

I feel compelled to speak to you.

3You yourself have given good advice to many people.

You have encouraged people who were discouraged.

4When people were struggling, you were able to say the right thing to help them.

You enabled them to be brave again.

5But now that you yourself are suffering, you have become discouraged.

You are not facing your troubles bravely {as you have helped others to do}.

6You should be confident because you honor God.

You should be hopeful because you conduct yourself with integrity.

7Think about this: God does not destroy people who are innocent!

No, God never kills people who are doing what is right!

8I know from experience that this is true:

When people plan to do bad things to others,

those bad things happen to them instead.

9God becomes very angry with them {because of the wrong things they plan to do},

and so God commands that they will die, and they do die.

10Wicked people may boast and threaten,

but God destroys them.

11Those wicked people will have nothing in the end, like lions that starve to death because God keeps them from catching any prey.

Different relatives will have to take care of the children of those wicked people, as if they were lion cubs whose parents caught no prey and they had to separate from each other in order to search for food.

12I once heard a message that someone came and whispered to me.

13One night I fell deeply asleep and had a dream that made me very perplexed.

14I was so scared that I started to shake all over.

15Then a spirit slid into view right in front of me!

This caused the hair on the back of my neck to stand straight up.

16The spirit stopped there, but I could not see what it really looked like.

However, I knew that there was some being in front of me.

At first it did not speak, but then it said,

17'No human being can be more righteous than God.

No person can be better than his Creator.

18Consider this: God recognizes that even his own angels may not always do what is right.

If they do not act wisely, he corrects them.

19So God is even more careful to discipline human beings,

knowing how very frail they are.

20{Humans are so fragile that} they can be here today and gone tomorrow.

{And humans are so insignificant that} a person can die, never to return to earth, and no one will even notice.

21Humans are {fragile,} like tents that collapse if someone pulls up their stakes.

And they may live their whole lives on earth without ever learning to be wise.'

Chapter 5

1If you ask someone to judge between you and God, no one will agree to do that for you.

Not even an angel would have the authority or wisdom to judge your case.

2People who do not respect God get angry with God {instead of considering how they have sinned}.

Naïve people resent God {when they do not get what they think they deserve}.

{Their anger and resentment lead them to disobey God, so that} God punishes them severely and even kills them.

So respect God and do not be naïve!

3I have seen foolish people who seemed to be successful.

But immediately I recognized that they would not prosper for long.

4Their children are never safe.

They always lose to their opponents in court

because no one defends them.

5People who do not respect God are not able to harvest the crops that they plant.

Poor people come and claim the grain—right to the edges of the field!

Yes, poor people see their crops and are glad to have them.

6After all, trouble does not come out of nowhere.

7No, people cause trouble for themselves throughout their lives.

This is as certain as the fact that sparks shoot up from a fire.

8If I were suffering as you are,

I would ask God for help

and trust God to help me.

9God does great things that we can not understand.

We can not even count the marvelous things that God does.

10God is the one who sends rain onto the earth

so that it waters our fields.

11God defends people who are humble.

He gives widows safe places to live.

12God keeps devious people from being able

to do what they plan.

13When people try cleverly to make others suffer,

God makes this cause suffering for them instead.

When people try to trick others,

God shows that it is a trick before it can fool the others.

14God keeps wicked people from knowing how to fulfill their plans.

It is as if the wicked people are always in the dark, even during the day,

and they need to feel around with their hands to try to find where to go.

15When powerful people threaten or accuse weak people,

God rescues the weak people.

He keeps the powerful people from harming them.

16{Because they know that God will help them,}

poor people can confidently expect that good things will happen to them.

God proves that they are innocent

when people accuse them falsely.

17Consider this: Anyone whom God corrects is better off because of it.

So you should be thankful that God is disciplining you.

18You should be thankful because

God allows people to suffer {in order to correct them}

and then he restores them.

19Whenever you are in trouble, God will keep rescuing you.

God will keep bad things from happening to you.

20When there is little food to eat, God will not allow you to starve to death.

When there is war, God will not allow your enemies to kill you.

21God will protect you when people say bad things about you.

God will protect you from things that could badly harm you.

22You will not worry about things like that

or about not having enough to eat.

You will not be afraid that wild animals will hurt you,

23because you will be confident that those wild animals will not attack you.

You will not have big rocks in your fields that make plowing difficult.

24You will know that things will go well for you in your home.

When you check on your animals, you will see that they are all there.

25You will be certain that you will have many descendants.

They will be as numerous as blades of grass.

26You will live a long life,

like grain that grows to become fully ripe before it is harvested.

27I can assure you that my friends and I have thought carefully about these things.

We know that they are true,

so please pay careful attention to what I have said!

You also will realize that it is true."

Chapter 6

1Then Job replied to Eliphaz and the others. He said,

2"If I could put all my troubles and misery

on a scale and weigh them,

3they would certainly be heavier than all the sand along the ocean shores.

That is why I spoke very rashly about the day when I was born.

4It is as if Almighty God had shot me with arrows.

It is as if those arrows had poison on their tips and that poison had gone into my spirit.

The things that God has done to me are like soldiers lined up to attack me.

5Just as a wild donkey does not complain by braying when it has plenty of grass to eat,

and an ox does not complain by bellowing when it has food to eat,

I would not complain if you were really helping me.

6People use salt to help them eat food that has little taste.

People do that with the white of an egg, for example.

I have been saying how I feel in order to help me deal with my situation.

7But regarding food itself,

I actually do not want to eat at all,

because my troubles are making me too upset to eat.

8I wish that God would do for me what I have asked of him:

9I wish that God would agree to let me die!

God is certainly able to end my life.

10If he did that, I would be comforted:

I would know that in spite of the unrelenting pain I had suffered,

I would still always have obeyed God's commands.

11I do not have the strength to endure until these troubles are over.

I have nothing to look forward to, so I do not want to live any longer!

12I am not strong like stone,

my body is not sturdy like bronze,

so I will not be able to endure these troubles for a long time.

13I am no longer able to help myself.

My troubles are keeping me from doing that.

14When a man has many troubles, his friends should be kind to him,

even if he stops honoring Almighty God.

15But you, my friends, have not helped me.

You are like streams in the wilderness

that travelers cannot depend on,

because they leave their channels empty in the dry season.

16These streams are full of water

when the melting ice and snow make them overflow,

17but when the dry season comes, there is no water flowing in those streams,

and the channels dry up.

18Merchant caravans turn off the road to search for water.

{However, there is no water in those stream beds,

so} the merchants die in the desert.

19The men in those caravans searched for some water

because they were sure that they would find some.

20They were very disappointed,

because they had been sure that they would find water.

They traveled a long distance to the stream bed,

but there was no water in it.

21Similarly, you three have not helped me at all!

You have seen that terrible things have happened to me,

and you are not helping me,

because you are afraid that God might do similar things to you.

22{After I lost all my wealth,} I did not ask any of you to give me money.

I did not plead with any of you to spend some of your money to help me.

23I never asked any of you to rescue me from my enemies.

No, I did not ask you to save me from people who were oppressing me.

24Answer me now, and then I will be quiet;

tell me what wrong things I have done!

25I would be willing to listen to what you had to say, even if it were painful, as long as it was helpful.

But though you are trying to correct me, you are not really helping me at all.

26I am a man who has nothing to hope for,

but you try to correct me, and you think what I say is as useless as the wind!

27In fact, you are treating me as callously as if you were gambling for an orphan

or arguing over the price of a friend you were selling into slavery!

28Please look at me! I will not lie while I am talking straight to you.

29Please stop saying that I have sinned! Stop criticizing me unfairly!

You should realize that I have not done anything wrong.

30You must not think that I am lying!

I know what is right to say and what is wrong to say.

Chapter 7

1"Life is very difficult for all of us on this earth!

Like manual laborers, our days are long and hard.

2We are like slaves who keep wanting to be in the cool of evening.

We are like workers who have to wait to be paid.

3Like a slave, I am enduring a time when it feels useless to be alive.

I have been experiencing many miserable nights.

4When I go to bed I say, 'I hope I will be able to sleep for a long time!'

But I never really get to sleep. I am restless right through to the morning.

5My body is covered with maggots and dirt;

pus oozes out of my open sores.

6I am running out of days faster than a shuttle releases yarn into a loom,

and I have no reason to hope that my life will end well.

7God, remember that my life will soon end.

{I do not think that} I will ever be happy again.

8God, you see me now,

but {after I die,} you will not see me anymore.

You may look for me then, but {you will not find me, because} I will not exist.

9Just as a cloud never appears in the sky again once it fades,

so when people die and go to the place where dead people are, they never return to earth.

10They never return and live in their houses again.

11So I will say everything I want to say.

I will speak because I am so upset.

I will complain because I am so bitter.

12God, you do not need to watch what I am doing so closely!

I am not a dangerous sea monster!

13Sometimes I think that if I could just go to sleep, I would stop suffering;

my pain would be less while I was sleeping.

14But then you make me have terrible nightmares!

15And I wish someone would kill me by choking me

so that I would not have to stay alive {and suffer so much}.

16I hate being alive {and suffering so much}!

I do not want to live any longer!

Stop afflicting me, because I will only be alive for a short time.

17We human beings are not very important!

You should not think that we are so important that you need to pay attention to what we do.

18You do not need to check every morning to see what we are doing!

You do not need to evaluate us at every moment!

19I wish you would stop watching me

and leave me alone for at least a little while!

20You watch me constantly,

but if I sin, that certainly does not harm you!

I feel as if I am your target and that you are shooting at me!

You act as if I am bothering you all the time!

21If I have done wrong things, you could just forgive me.

I am going to die soon.

When I do, then if you decide you want us to be friends, it will be too late, because I will be dead.”

Chapter 8

1Then Bildad, Job’s friend from the Shuhite people group, responded to Job. He said,

2“Job, you should not continue to talk like this.

You are saying a lot of things, but they are not sensible.

3God always does things fairly.

Yes, Shaddai always does what is right.

4Your children sinned against God.

This is evident, because God has punished them for the evil things they did.

5But as for you, you should pray to God. Yes, you should ask Shaddai to help you.

6If you are genuinely good,

then God will certainly do something good for you.

He will give you back the abundant prosperity that good people have.

7God would make you so wealthy later in life

that it would seem as if you were not very prosperous before!

8You should really consider the wise teachings of the people who lived before us.

Yes, you should think about what our ancestors learned about life.

9I advise you to consider the wisdom of our ancestors

because we have only been alive for a short time

and we know very little.

This is because our time here on the earth is very short,

like a shadow that appears briefly and then goes away.

10But if you consider the wisdom of our ancestors, you will learn useful things.

Indeed, you will learn very profound things.

11Papyrus certainly does not grow away from marshland.

No, reeds certainly cannot grow where there is no water.

12If their water dries up while they are blossoming,

they wither, while plants that do have water keep flourishing.

13People who do not pay attention to God are like those reeds.

Such people hope for good things, but they do not get them.

14Godless people confidently expect good things to happen to them, but those things do not happen.

Godless people trust certain other people to help them, but those others prove unreliable.

15Godless people think they are secure because they are wealthy,

but ultimately they can not rely on their wealth for security.

When they begin to fail despite their wealth, they try to preserve their status,

but they fail anyway.

16Godless people are like plants that formerly flourished in abundant sunshine,

whose branches once spread out over the ground.

17Godless people are like plants whose roots once twisted securely around piles of stones

and clung tightly to rocks.

18But a person can still pull a plant completely out of the ground even if it is that healthy and securely rooted.

Then it will be as if the plant was never there in the first place.

People who do not pay attention to God will perish just as completely.

19So people who do not pay attention to God will be sad in the end.

Other people will come and take their places.

20So I tell you, Job, that God will help you if you do what is right.

But God will not help you if you do what is wrong.

21God can still make you happy,

yes, very happy.

22{When God blesses you,} everyone who opposed you will be very ashamed.

God will completely destroy wicked people."

Chapter 9

1Then Job replied to Bildad and the others. He said,

2"I certainly know that what you have said is true.

But a person can not prove that he has done the right thing

{and that God should not punish him}.

3If someone wanted to argue with God about that,

God would ask him many questions

and that person would not be able to answer any of them!

4God thinks very deeply and he is very powerful.

No one who has tried to argue against him has ever been able to win.

5God moves mountains {in earthquakes} without anyone knowing in advance what he is going to do.

God knocks down mountains when he is angry.

6God causes earthquakes far below the surface of the earth

that shake the ground and make it move.

7On some days, God makes it so cloudy that people can not see the sun in the sky.

On some nights, God makes it so cloudy that people can not see the stars shining.

8God created the sky all by himself.

God defeated the forces of chaos {so that he could make an orderly universe}.

9God arranged the stars in the sky to make constellations such as the Bear, Orion, and the Pleiades.

God arranged stars into many other constellations as well.

10God does amazing things that people can not understand.

God does more marvelous things than people are able to count.

11If God passed by where I was, I would not be able to see him.

Yes, he might be going by, but I would not notice him.

12If God wants to take something away, no one can stop him from doing that.

No one can require God to defend what he is doing.

13God would continue to be angry {even if someone tried to calm him down}.

{No one can oppose him;} he {even} defeated the forces of Rahab, the great sea monster.

14So I could hardly think of the right words to say

in order to argue a case against God!

15Even if I were innocent, I would not be able to argue a case against him.

All I could do would be to ask God, as my judge, to be merciful to me.

16Even if he agreed to hear my case,

I would not believe that he was genuinely considering my arguments.

17He keeps causing troubles that batter me.

He hurts me many times for no good reason.

18He causes me to suffer all the time.

It is as if he will not even let me get my breath again {before he causes the next disaster}.

19Suppose I did make a case against him. And suppose the winner would be the one who was stronger.

Then he would win, because he is far stronger than I am.

And it would not matter who was right,

since no one could make him obey what a judge decided.

20Even though I was innocent, he would find grounds in what I said to punish me.

Even though I had not done anything wrong, he would still decide, based on what I said, that I was guilty.

21I have not done anything wrong, {but that does not matter anymore because} I do not care what happens to me.

I do not care whether I live or die.

22God punishes everyone the same way.

As I have been saying, God destroys everyone whether they have done wrong or not.

23When people experience disaster and it causes them to die suddenly,

God laughs when he sees them suffer, even if they are innocent.

24God has allowed wicked people to control what happens to everyone else.

It is as though God has caused judges not to be able to judge fairly.

If it is not God who has done that,

who, then, has done it?

25I am approaching the end of my life more quickly than a messenger runs to bring news.

it is as if the days of my life are running away from me.

Good things do not happen to me.

26My life is going by very rapidly,

as fast as a sailing boat made from reeds,

as fast as an eagle swooping down to seize an animal.

27If I decide that I will just forget what I am complaining about,

if I decide to stop looking sad and try to be cheerful,

28I still become afraid again

because I know that God does not consider me innocent

and so I think that he will punish me.

29He will condemn me anyway,

so why should I keep trying in vain to defend myself?

30If I washed my body with pure water from melted snow

and cleansed my hands with strong soap

{to show how innocent I am},

31God would just throw me into a filthy pit {to show how guilty he considers me to be}.

My body would become so dirty that it would be as if my own clothes did not want to be on it!

32God is not a human, as I am,

so I could not refute him to prove that I am innocent

if we went together to have a trial in a courtroom.

33There is no one to mediate,

no one who has authority over both of us.

34There is no one who could keep God from causing me to suffer,

who could keep God from doing terrifying things that frighten me.

35{If someone could protect me and judge between us,}

I would declare that I am innocent without being afraid of God.

But I can not do that now.

Chapter 10

1I am tired of living,

so I will freely express everything I want to complain about {without worrying about what God will do to me}.

Yes, I will say exactly how unhappy I am.

2I will say to God, 'If you are going to punish me,

you should tell me what I have done wrong!'

3You seem to think that it is all right to harm me

and to abandon me, whom you created.

But at the same time, you seem pleased to allow

wicked people to do the things that they plan to do!

4Certainly you know and understand more than what people can see with their eyes! {So you should understand my true motives and know that I am innocent.}

5You do not live for only a short time as people do!

6So you do not need to act as if you would run out of time

if you did not discover all of my sins right away!

7{You do not need to work hard to discover any sins that I may have committed,

because} you know that I am not guilty.

And there is no one who could help me get away from you {if you decided you should punish me}.

8You personally created every single part of me.

So it is not right for you to destroy someone whom you created yourself.

9Please recall how you made me! You molded me the way people mold objects out of clay.

If you destroy me, I will crumble into dust {and you will lose your marvelous creative work}.

10You made me through a careful process,

the way people carefully make cheese out of milk.

11You attached my bones together with tendons,

and then you covered them with flesh inside my skin.

12You are the one who made me alive.

{It seemed that} you were faithfully taking care of me.

{It seemed that} you were protecting me.

13But you kept secret what you were planning to do to me.

I am certain that you were planning to do these things to me!

14You were watching me to see if I would sin

so that you could punish me for sinning.

15If I am a wicked man,

then I hope that terrible things will happen to me.

But even if I am a good man,

I must still act ashamed

because you are punishing me as if I had sinned.

16If I did act like the good man that I am,

you would {conclude that you should punish me further

and you would} hunt for me the way a lion hunts for some animal to kill.

{When you caught me,} you would do even more things to harm me greatly.

17You would claim that I had committed even more sins.

You would become even more angry with me.

You would keep punishing me in new ways.

18God, you should not have allowed my mother to give birth to me!

I wish that I had died at birth!

Yes, I wish that my parents had never shown me to anyone.

19I wish that I had never even existed!

I wish that I had died at birth so that people had buried me right away.

20I am not going to live very much longer!

So please leave me alone and let me have a little peace.

21{Let me have some peace now because}

soon I will go to the place from which I will never return.

In that place {where dead people go} it is always gloomy.

Yes, it is very dark.

22Yes, in that place it is very dark, the way it is in deep shadow.

Things are very chaotic there.

Even the small light that is there

is like darkness.'"

Chapter 11

1Then Zophar, Job's friend from the town of Naamah, responded to Job. He said,

2"I would like to respond to the long speech that you have just given.

You talk a lot about how innocent you are, but that does not mean that you truly are innocent.

3You have boasted that you are innocent,

and I need to talk back in response.

You have said disrespectful things about God.

I need to tell you that you should be ashamed!

4I need to correct you because you have told God,

'I believe the right things,

and you know that I have done the right things.'

5If only God would speak

and say something to correct you!

6

If only God would tell you the secrets that he knows because he is so wise!

{You need to realize that} God knows far more than you do.

If you could understand as God does,

you would realize that God is punishing you less than you deserve!

7You will never be able to understand God by thinking hard about him.

No, you will never be able to find out everything about Shaddai.

8God's wisdom is so much greater than ours,

it is as if it is higher than the sky.

So there is nothing you can do to understand it all.

It is as if God's wisdom is deeper below the earth

than the place where dead people go.

So it is impossible for you to know it all.

9There is so much to know about God

that it is as if that knowledge is longer than the earth

and wider than the ocean.

10If God wants to arrest you and put you on trial,

no one can stop him from doing that.

11{God is a trustworthy judge} because he knows which people have bad character.

When God sees people doing wicked things, he punishes them.

12Some people simply have no understanding.

They will become wise when humans start having wild donkeys as babies{—that is, never!}

13Job, I urge you to repent humbly

and pray sincerely to God.

14If you have been doing evil things, stop doing them.

If you do nothing wrong in any part of your life,

15then you will be able to act as a person who is not ashamed of anything.

You will be strong, and you will not be afraid of anything.

16You will not be afraid, because you will forget all the bad things that happened to you.

They will all be gone, like the water that flows away down a river.

17Your life will be happy again.

It will be as if the sun were shining on you as brightly as it shines at mid-day.

You have had many troubles, but they will end,

just as night ends when the sun rises.

18You will feel safe because you will be confident that good things will happen to you.

You will think about your life and realize that you can go to bed and sleep peacefully.

19You will lie down to sleep and nothing will scare you.

Many people will come and ask you to be kind to them.

20But God will punish wicked people by making them die.

They will not be able to escape from God's punishment.

They will hope to live, but they will die anyway."

Chapter 12

1Then Job replied to Zophar and the others. He said,

2"You are speaking as if you were the people to whom everyone should listen.

You seem to believe that you are the only wise people who are now alive.

3But I have as much good sense as you do.

I am just as wise as you are.

People certainly know, in general, the things that you have said.

4Before, when I prayed to God for help, God would help me.

But now{, because God is not helping me in my suffering,} other people laugh at me.

I am righteous and I honor God, but they laugh at me!

5People like you who have no troubles think that others are suffering because of their sins.

You think that God is punishing us and that is why we are suffering.

6Meanwhile, bandits get rich by robbing people.

Those who defiantly disobey God live peacefully.

Such people believe that God cannot stop them from doing what they want to do.

7But if the wild animals could speak,

and if you asked them {what they know about God},

they would tell you {that God is responsible when someone suffers as I am suffering}.

If the birds could speak,

and if you asked them {the same question},

they would tell you {the same thing}.

8If the ground could talk, and if you asked it about God,

or if fish could talk and you asked them,

they too would tell you that God is responsible when people suffer.

9All of them certainly know that it is Yahweh himself who has caused me to suffer.

10He controls whether all living creatures live or die,

including whether any person dies or continues to live.

11We decide whether our food is good or bad by tasting it.

In the same way, we think carefully about what we hear people say in order to decide whether it is good or bad advice.

{I have listened carefully to you, and I have decided that you are giving me bad advice!}

12Older people have usually become wise.

Because they have lived a long time, they have learned many things.

13God himself is wise and very powerful.

He has good sense and he understands everything.

14Indeed, if God tears something down, no one can build it back up again.

If God puts someone in prison, no one can enable that person to escape.

15Yes, God is so powerful that if he prevents rain from falling, then the water on the earth dries up.

If God causes a lot of rain to fall, then water floods onto the land.

16God is the one who is truly strong and wise.

He does not let anyone get away with doing wrong or with convincing others to do wrong.

17{God is so powerful that} he can remove royal advisors from their positions,

and he can cause judges to become fools.

18God can take away the ruling authority that kings have

and make those kings become slaves instead.

19God can remove priests from their positions

and take the power away from those who have long ruled others.

20God can cause trusted counselors not to know what to say,

and he can cause wise elders no longer to have good sense.

21God can cause princes to lose the respect of others,

and he can cause those who are powerful to become weak.

22God can enable people to understand

things that are very difficult to understand.

23God causes some nations to become very great,

but later he destroys them.

God enables some nations to enlarge their territory greatly,

but later he allows others to conquer them and take their people away as prisoners.

24He causes some human rulers to become foolish.

As a result, they try one thing after another without success,

as if they were lost in a desert without roads.

25It is as if they were trying to feel their way in complete darkness.

It is as if they were staggering around drunk.”

Chapter 13

1“I can assure you, my friends, that I already know everything that you have been telling me.

Yes, I have heard and understood all that you have said.

2I know everything that you know.

I do not know less than you do.

3But I would like to speak with Almighty God{, not with you}.

I would like to convince him {that I am innocent}.

4As for you, you are telling so many lies about me

that other people can hardly recognize what I am really like.

Your advice is so worthless

that you are all like doctors who sell people useless medicine.

5I wish that you would just stop talking.

Then you would really seem to be wise!

6Please pay attention to what I am telling you!

7You are speaking on God’s behalf,

but you are not telling the truth!

You are speaking deceptively,

but you think that you are helping God!

8You are not being fair to me.

Instead, you are acting as if you are God’s lawyers defending him in court!

9If God investigates what you are doing,

he will find that you are doing wrong.

No, you can not deceive him

as you might deceive a human being!

10God would certainly rebuke you when he discovered that

you were pretending to be fair but were actually being unfair.

11He would certainly bring the full force of his power against you.

That would make you very afraid of him!

12You are quoting traditional sayings,

but they have no value in my situation.

Your arguments in support of your position

are very easy for someone to refute.

13So stop talking to me. Allow me to speak.

I do not care what God does to me as a result of what I say.

14I will be risking my life.

I will be taking the chance that God will execute me for what I say.

But I have good reason to do that.

15Indeed, God might kill me {for starting to argue a case against him},

but I hope that he {would still judge me fairly after I die}.

So I am going to defend my behavior to him in person.

16I believe that arguing a case against God

will actually help convince God that I am innocent.

After all, no wicked person would dare to approach God personally."

17"God, listen very carefully to what I say.

Pay attention to me as I speak.

18Please pay careful attention because I will be defending myself

by telling you things I have thought carefully about.

I have examined myself,

and I am convinced that I am innocent.

19I do not believe that anyone could prove

that what I am going to say is false.

If I knew that it was false, I would not argue this case.

I would accept dying {as my fair punishment}.

20However, I must ask you to stop doing two things to me.

Then I will be able to speak with you in person.

21The first thing I ask is that you stop punishing me.

The second thing I ask is that you stop scaring me.

22{If you agree to stop punishing me and stop scaring me, then}

go ahead and start questioning me, and I will respond.

Or allow me to question you first, and then you respond to my questions.

23Tell me what I have done that is wrong.

Tell me what sins I have committed.

Show me how I have disobeyed you.

24I do not understand why you are avoiding me.

I do not understand why you are treating me like your enemy.

25I am as insignificant as a leaf that the wind blows,

so you do not need to punish me {as if I were a dangerous criminal}.

I am as unimportant as a bit of dry chaff,

so you do not need to chase me.

26{From the way I am suffering, it appears that you are punishing me because}

you consider that I have done terrible things.

It seems that you are punishing me even for

the wrong things I did when I was young {and I did not know any better}.

27It seems as if {you are judging me too strictly, as if} you had put chains on my feet {to keep me from going anywhere}.

It feels as if you are watching everything that I do very closely.

It is as if you will only let me do a few specific things.

28{But you do not need to watch me so closely.}

I am a mere human being

with a body that is as fragile as rotten wood that is falling apart,

as fragile a piece of cloth that the larvae of moths are eating.

Chapter 14

1Human beings live only a short time,

and during that time they experience much trouble.

2People live brief lives, like flowers that appear quickly but then wither and fall to the ground.

Yes, people's lives are temporary, like shadows that appear only for a short time.

3God, you do not need to watch fragile humans so carefully.

You do not need to judge everything that I do.

4No one can make something that is acceptable to God out of something that is not acceptable to him.

5You have decided how many days each human life will last.

Yes, you have decided how many months each person will live.

No one can live any longer than the time you have decided.

Because this is true, **6**

please stop watching people so closely.

Give them relief so that they can live out their brief lives in peace.

7Now even after people cut a tree down,

it is possible for it to start growing again and make new branches.

8Its roots in the ground may be very old,

and its stump may be decaying,

9but when rain falls on it,

it may revive and send up shoots just as a young plant does.

10But even the strongest people die.

They grow weak and stop breathing,

and then they are gone forever.

11Just as water evaporates from a lake,

and just as a riverbed dries up,

12so people die and do not become alive again.

Until the heavens do not exist any longer,

people who die will not come back to life.

No, no one will be able to make them alive again.

13I wish that you, God, would put me safely in the place where dead people go and forget about me.

That way I would not suffer any more until you were no longer angry with me.

I wish that you would decide how much time I need to spend there

and then come and rescue me from that place.

14I do not believe that we humans live again after we die.

If I knew that I would live again, I would wait patiently throughout this difficult life.

I would know that after I died, things would become different for me.

15{After I had been in the place where dead people go for the time you had determined,} you would call for me,
and I would answer you.

You would be eager to see me, one of the creatures that you had made.

16Yes, then you would protect me wherever I went,

and you would not be watching to see whether I sinned or not.

17You would forgive the things I had done wrong.

Yes, it would be as if I had not done them at all.

18But just as mountains erode away and rocks tumble down slopes,

19just as water wears away stones and floods wash away soil,

so you make all people die, even though they hope to keep living.

20You make us age the whole time we are living, and then we die.

Yes, you make our faces show that we are old and about to die,

and then you make us go to the place where dead people go.

21When we die, we do not know whether our children will grow up and do things that will cause other people to
honor them.

If they do shameful things instead, we do not know that either.

22When we die, we feel sorry for ourselves, but no one else feels sorry for us.

Yes, we grieve for ourselves, but no one else grieves for us.”

Chapter 15

1Then Eliphaz, Job’s friend from the town of Teman, replied to what Job had said. Eliphaz told him,

2“If you were truly wise, you would not have said such useless things.

You have said a lot, but it has all been insignificant.

3You should not be saying things that do not benefit anyone.

No, you should not speak things that are not helpful.

4You are actually encouraging others not to respect God.

Yes, you are discouraging people from honoring him.

5You are wicked, and that is why you say what you do.

You are talking in the way that deceptive people talk.

6Everything that you say shows that God should punish you.

It is not necessary for me to prove that.

7{You should not think that you know so much}

You were not the first person whom God created.

God did not make you when he first formed the world.

8You do not listen as God makes his plans.

You should not think that you are the only person who is wise.

9We know everything that you know.

We understand everything that you understand.

10My friends and I are saying the same things

that old, wise people say,

people who were born before your father was.

11God wants to comfort you

and speak gently to you,

but you do not appreciate that.

12You should not be allowing yourself to become so emotional.

No, you should not be allowing yourself to lose your temper.

13You have become angry with God,

and so you are saying harsh things against him.

14No human being can be sinless.

No one on this earth can be completely righteous.

15God does not even trust his own angels {to do the right thing every time}.

He does not consider the heavens to be completely pure.

16So God certainly does not consider people to be pure who commit terrible wrongs,

who do evil deeds as often as they drink water.

17Job, I want to explain {why you are experiencing so much suffering}.

Please listen to me.

I have learned many things,

and I want to explain them to you.

18These are things that wise people have passed down from their ancestors.

These wise people have declared all these things openly.

19God gave the land {of Edom} exclusively to my wise ancestors.

No one came from another country and caused them to think wrongly about God.

20Wicked people suffer great pain the whole time that they are alive.

God has determined that this will happen constantly to those who oppress others.

21Wicked people constantly experience terrible things.

They may become wealthy, but they will lose that wealth.

22Wicked people lose hope that their troubles will ever end.

They are always afraid that they are going to die violently.

23They have to go and search for food to eat. They do not know where to find it.

They know that they will certainly experience disasters soon.

24Wicked people are always afraid that bad things will happen to them.

Their fear keeps them from taking actions that might protect them,

as if an opposing king had defeated them in a battle {and they had become helpless}.

25These things happen to wicked people because they oppose God.

They think they are strong enough to defeat Shaddai.

26Wicked people stubbornly oppose God

as if they had a strong shield to protect themselves against God.

27But they are so fat that they would not be able to fight!

28Wicked people have to live in cities that others have deserted.

They live in homes that others have abandoned.

Those homes are about to collapse into a pile of ruins.

29Few wicked people become rich, and those who do become rich do not stay rich for very long.

No, they do not acquire great wealth.

30Wicked people will always be in trouble.

They will be like trees whose branches burn up.

When God gives the command, they will die.

31Wicked people are often foolish and want to get things that are actually worthless.

In the end, all they have are those worthless things.

32While they are still young, they will die.

They are like branches that have broken off a tree and dried up.

33Wicked people are like vines whose grapes fall off before they are ripe.

They are like olive trees whose blossoms fall off before they produce any fruit.

34Surely wicked people will not have any descendants.

Those who took money from bribes will not have any money left in the end.

35They plan to cause trouble and to do evil things.

They continually think of ways to deceive other people."

Chapter 16

1Then Job replied to Eliphaz and the others. He said,

2"I have heard many things like that before.

All of you, instead of helping me, are only causing me to feel more miserable.

3I wish that you would stop saying these things that are not helping me.

Eliphaz, I do not understand why you feel that you must keep replying to me.

4

I could say the same things that you are saying

if you were the ones suffering instead of me.

I could make great speeches to criticize you,

and I could shake my head at you {to ridicule you}.

5I would think that I was encouraging you by what I said.

Yes, I would think that I was relieving you by speaking with you

6But as it is, if I talk, I continue to suffer just as much,

and if I do not talk, that does not reduce my suffering either.

7But now {I will speak to God}.

God, you have taken away all my strength,

and you have killed all of my children.

8You have made me sick, and I have lost a lot of weight,

and people think that shows that I am a sinner.

They see how thin I am,

and they think that proves that I am guilty.

9God is so angry with me that he has attacked me and hurt me.

Now he is moving his teeth back and forth because he is still so angry with me.

He is watching me closely {to see how he can attack me again}. **10**People look at me with their mouths wide open in order to humiliate me.

They hit me in the face because they think I have done wrong.

They crowd around me to threaten me.

11God has allowed people who do not honor him to mistreat me.

He has allowed wicked people to do whatever they want to me.

12Previously, I was living peacefully,

but then God caused great trouble for me.

It is as if he grabbed my neck and shook me to pieces.

It is as if he set me up as a target

13and people were surrounding me and shooting arrows at me.

It is as if those arrows cut open my kidneys

and caused the gall from my liver to spill onto the ground.

God is not having any mercy on me at all!

14It is as if I were a wall that God was breaking down in many places.

It is as if God were rushing at me like a soldier who was attacking his enemy.

15{I am grieving so deeply that} it is as if I have sewn rough mourning cloth right onto my skin!

I feel weak and humiliated.

16My face is red because I have cried so much.

I have dark circles around my eyes because I have not been sleeping well.

17All this has happened to me even though I have not violently harmed anyone

and even though I pray sincerely to God.

18I feel as if I am the victim of a violent crime, and I want people to show concern about what has happened to me.

I do not want anyone to stop me while I am demanding that God act justly toward me.

19But even now, I know that there is someone in heaven who will testify for me.

He will confirm that what I have done is right.

20This person in heaven is my friend,

and he will plead with God for me.

{At the same time, I will also plead with God

so earnestly} that I will weep.

21My friend will plead with God for me in heaven

the same way one person pleads for another person here on earth.

22{I want God to treat me justly now, while there is still time,}

because within a few years I will die.

Chapter 17

1My time to live is almost over. I have no strength left.

I am just about to die.

2The people who are around me are continually making fun of me.

I have to watch them taunt me.

3"God, even though you would be trying my case,

please also guarantee to yourself that I will appear in court and behave as a defendant should.

There is certainly no one else who will do that for me.

4My friends will not vouch for me,

because you have prevented them from understanding that I am innocent.

Nevertheless, you will not prove them right by declaring me guilty.

5{I know that you will treat me justly because you make sure that people act justly.

{For example,} you punish people who give false testimony against their neighbors in exchange for a bribe.

You make their whole families suffer if they do that.

6But because God is punishing me,

people use my name to mean someone who was formerly prosperous but who experienced disaster because he was wicked.

People even spit in my face {to insult me}.

7Because I am very sad, it has become hard for me to see.

My whole body has become so thin that it is as if I am not even here.

8When people who are truly righteous see what has happened to me, it shocks them.

It makes them want to punish people who really disobey God.

9Those who are truly righteous will continue to do what is right,

and those who are innocent will continue to become stronger.

10But as for you friends of mine,

we could continue talking,

but I do not think that I will conclude that even one of you is wise.

11My time to live has almost ended.

I have not been able to do the things that I planned to do.

I can no longer hope that the things I most desired will happen.

12My friends say that the troubles I am experiencing are actually a good thing

{because God is using the troubles to correct me}.

My friends say that because my troubles have become so bad,

that means they must nearly be over.

13Suppose the only home I could hope to have was the place where dead people go.

Suppose I were going to stay in that dark place.

14Suppose I considered the grave to be my family home,

and suppose I considered the worms that live in graves to be my family.

15Then that would show that I truly do not have good things to hope for.

Everyone would recognize that I was not really hoping for anything.

16It would be as if everything I hoped for were going to the place where dead people go.

Yes, it would be as if people were burying the things I have hoped for with me in a grave."

Chapter 18

1Then Bildad, Job's friend from the Shuhite people group, responded to Job. He said,

2"Please stop talking!

If you would stop talking and listen, we could tell you something.

3You seem to think that we are as stupid as cattle.

4But by being so angry, you are only hurting yourself.

You seem to think that everyone should abandon the earth because life on earth is no longer worth living for anyone after what has happened to you.

You seem to think that there should be a great earthquake {as a sign of what an awful thing has happened to you}.

5But actually, what has happened to you is not momentous.

Wicked people are bound to lose their prosperity.

They will not continue to enjoy happiness.

6It will be as if the light went out in the tent in which they were living,

so that they could not enjoy living there.

7Wicked people become weaker {because of the troubles they cause for themselves}.

They try to take advantage of other people,

but they hurt themselves instead.

8Yes, it is as if they walk into a net that they do not realize is there

or fall into a pit that someone has concealed as a trap.

9It is as if their feet get caught in a trap

that does not let them go.

10It is as if a loop of rope that someone has hidden on the ground

springs up and seizes them when they walk onto it.

11Everywhere they go, things cause them to be terrified.

It is as if those things are pursuing them and biting at their heels.

12They will become weak, as if they did not have enough food to eat.

They will always be at risk of disaster.

13Diseases will spread all over their skin.

Yes, a horrible disease will cause their bodies to decay.

14They have a secure life, but it ends suddenly.

They die without being able to do anything to save their lives.

15Then all of their possessions will belong to other people.

Wicked people will have nothing left, as if God had burned up everything they had by making burning stones fall on it.

16They will be lifeless, like trees whose roots have dried up

and whose branches have all withered.

17No one on the earth will remember them anymore.

No, no one anywhere in the world will recall what they were like.

18Suddenly wicked people will die and no longer be alive.

They will no longer be able to live in this world.

19They will have no children or grandchildren living in their people group after they die.

They will have no descendants living where they previously lived.

20Anyone who hears about what happened to them

will be shocked.

21This is certainly what happens to unrighteous people.

Yes, this is what happens to people who do not honor God.”

Chapter 19

1Then Job replied to Bildad and the others. He said,

2"The three of you must stop hurting me
and discouraging me by saying that I am wicked!
3You have insulted me repeatedly.
You should be ashamed for speaking so harshly to me!
4Even if it were true that I had done wrong,
that would be my concern, not yours!
5If you truly think that you are better than I am,
and if you are claiming that I must be guilty because I am suffering,
6you should realize that it is God who has caused me to suffer.
It is as if he had a net and caught me in it, like an animal he wanted to trap.
7Listen to me: I protest that God is punishing me unfairly,
but no one agrees with me.
I cry for help, but no one, not even God, treats me fairly.
8It is as if God has blocked my road
so that I can not go anywhere.
It is as if God has forced me
to try to find my way in total darkness.
9He has taken away my good reputation.
It is as if he has taken a crown of authority off my head.
10He is ruining everything that I have.
I no longer hope to experience good things in this life.
I expect that I will soon die,
as if I were a tree that he had pulled completely out of the ground.
11He attacks me because he is very angry with me.
He treats me as if I were his enemy.
12It is as if he were sending an army against me
that has surrounded me and is getting ready to destroy me.
13God has caused my family to abandon me.

Those who know me now act like strangers toward me.

14My relatives have left me

and my good friends ignore me.

15People who were guests in my house and even my female servants

act as if they do not recognize me.

They treat me like a foreigner whom they do not know.

16When I order my servants to come, they do not obey.

I have to beg my servants to help me.

17My wife stays away from me,

even though I was a good father to our children.

18Even young children disrespect me.

When I stand up to talk, they laugh at me.

19All of my intimate friends now detest me.

The people I love are hostile to me.

20I have become so thin that my bones are visible beneath my skin;

I am barely alive.

21I plead with you, my three friends, pity me

because God is making me suffer greatly.

22You should not be making me suffer as well,

as if you were God and had to punish sin.

You seem to think that you need to keep accusing me of doing things wrong!

23I wish that someone would now write what I have been saying

in a book {so that people could read it}.

24{Or else,} I wish that someone would carve what I have said onto a rock with a chisel

and highlight it with lead so that people could always read it.

25But I know that there is someone who will defend me

and that some day he will appear here on the earth and declare me innocent.

26Even after I die and people bury me and my body decays,

still, in my body I will see God.

27I will see him myself!

Yes, I will see him personally!

My emotions overwhelm me as I think about that!

28But if you three men still think that you need to accuse me of doing wrong

because you believe I am responsible for the sufferings I am experiencing,

29then you should fear that God will punish you,

because God becomes angry with unfair people like you and he punishes them.

When that happens, you will know that God punishes people fairly."

Chapter 20

1Then Zophar, Job's friend from the town of Naamah, responded to Job. He said,

2"What you have said troubles me greatly,

so I want to reply to you right away.

3You have insulted me by what you have said.

But I have had a good idea about how I should respond to you.

4People have known this for a long time,

for as long as they have existed:

5Wicked people are only briefly successful;

people who refuse to honor God are happy only for a short time.

6They may seem for a while to be very great

and very powerful,

7but they will disappear forever like refuse that people throw away.

People who knew them will wonder where they have gone.

8They will disappear the way a dream ends abruptly when a person wakes up.

They will no longer exist.

Yes, they will vanish just like the dreams that people have at night.

9Those who once saw those wicked people will never see them again.

Those wicked people will no longer live where they once lived.

10They will have to return the valuable things that they stole from poor people.

If they die before they can do that, their children will have to do it.

11Wicked people will die before they grow old

and others will bury them in the ground.

12For wicked people, doing wrong things is like having sweet food in their mouths

that they want to continue tasting.

13They do not want to stop doing wrong things,

as if those things were delicious food that they enjoyed eating.

14{But they will regret doing those wrong things.}

They will feel like people who eat what they should not eat

and get a badly upset stomach

that feels as if it is full of poison.

15Wicked people try to get as much money as they can but they do not keep it,

just as people who eat too much throw up the food that they ate.

God makes sure that they lose their wealth.

16A person who does evil deeds will die as a result,

as certainly as the bite of a poisonous snake kills a person.

17A wicked person will not experience the abundant blessings

that flow like a stream from God.

18Wicked people will have to give back the things that they acquired dishonestly.

They will not be able to continue using those things.

They will not have the opportunity to enjoy the things they got by doing business,

19because they oppressed poor people and refused to help them,

and they took other people's houses by cheating them.

20No matter how much they got, they still remained greedy,

and as a result, they lost the things that they enjoyed having.

21When they finish eating their food, there is never anything left over,

because they greedily eat it all.

That is why they do not remain wealthy.

22While they are still very wealthy,

they will suddenly experience trouble.

Many people will be hostile to them and hurt them.

23Even as wicked people are enjoying luxuries,

God will show that he is very angry with them.

He will punish them with great suffering,

even as they are indulging themselves.

24Even as they are trying to escape from smaller punishments,

they will experience greater punishments.

25It will be as if God had shot an arrow through a wicked person's body

and he had to pull it out of his back.

But the shiny point of the arrow would have cut a gash in his liver,

and he would know that he was going to die.

26God has decided that he will destroy the valuable possessions that wicked people have.

It will be as if a fire that God starts will burn them up.

Yes, God will destroy every last thing that they have in their homes.

27The sins that those wicked people have committed will become apparent.

If the sky could speak, it would tell all the wrong things it saw them do.

If the earth could speak, it would also be a witness against them.

28On the day when God punishes people,

he will take away all the possessions of wicked people.

It will be as if a flood had washed them away.

29That is what God will do to wicked people.

That is what God has decreed will happen to them."

Chapter 21

1Then Job replied to Zophar and the others. He said,

2"Please listen carefully to what I say.

That is something that you can do to comfort me.

3Be patient with me, and allow me to speak.

Then, after I have finished speaking,

you can continue to make fun of me if you wish{, although I hope you will not}.

4I am not protesting to people about my suffering, I am protesting to God!

And so it is certainly acceptable for me to be impatient!

5If you consider my situation, it will shock you.

That should make you put your hands over your mouths {and say no more}!

6When I think about what has happened to me,

I am frightened and my entire body shakes.

7I do not understand why wicked people live long lives

and become very powerful.

8They live to see their children grow up

and start their own households nearby.

9Wicked people live safely in their homes without being afraid.

God does not punish them.

10Their bulls mate with their cows successfully.

Their cows give birth to calves. They do not miscarry.

11Wicked people are able to send their young children outside to play {without worrying about what will happen to them}.

Their children dance playfully.

12The children play tambourines and lyres {as they sing},

and they also play flutes happily.

13Wicked people enjoy having good things while they are alive,

and then they die peacefully and go to the place where dead people go.

14While they are alive, they say to God, ‘Leave us alone;

we do not care about how you want us to live our lives!’

15Those wicked people also say, ‘It does not matter whether we worship Shaddai.

We would not get any advantage by praying to him.’

16Wicked people wrongly think that they have become prosperous because of what they have done.

I want to think completely differently from the way they think.

17It often happens that wicked people die

without experiencing any disasters.

I do not think that God actually becomes angry with them and punishes them.

18God does not destroy them like straw that the wind blows away.

It is never as if a whirlwind carries them off.

19You say, ‘When people have committed sins,

God remembers and punishes their children for those sins.’

I say that God should punish the people who sin, not their children.

That way sinners will know that God is punishing them for their own sins.

20Wicked people should have the experience of God destroying them.

They should know what it is like for Shaddai to punish them in his wrath.

21After all, once wicked people die,

they are no longer concerned for their families who are still alive.

22Since God judges everyone, even those who are in heaven,

no one can teach him anything.

23Some people die while they are still very healthy.

They die when their lives are peaceful and they are not afraid that bad things will happen to them.

24Their bodies are fat.

Their bones are strong.

25Other people are very miserable when they die.

They die before good things have happened to them.

26Both kinds of people die, and other people bury them.

Their bodies all decompose.

{Everyone dies, so it is clear that dying is not always the punishment for being wicked.}

27Listen, I know what you three are thinking about me.

You are wrongly applying to me things that are true about wicked people.

28I know you are wrong because you say, ‘God does not allow evil rulers to keep living!

God does not allow wicked people to keep living!’

29If you want to know what life on earth is really like, you should ask people who travel much {and see many things}.

You will have to admit that the things they see and describe show what life is really like.

30{Travelers will report} that wicked people do not suffer when there are great disasters.

{They will report} that wicked people escape from God’s punishment.

31No one dares to accuse wicked people openly of doing wrong.

No one punishes them for the evil things they have done.

32When wicked people die, others carry their bodies to their graves in a solemn procession.

Then people guard their graves to protect them.

33It would please wicked people to see how others build mounds over their graves to honor them.

It would also please them to see how many people take part in their funeral processions.

Many people walk in front of their bodies and many others walk behind them.

34Since all of this is true about wicked people, what you have been telling me does not make sense, and it has not comforted me.

You have been trying to answer me by telling me things that are not true!”

Chapter 22

1Then Eliphaz, Job’s friend from the town of Teman, replied to what Job had said. Eliphaz told him,

2“No one can do anything to benefit God!

No, people can only do things to benefit themselves, and only if they are wise.

3It does not give Shaddai any extra pleasure if you live in the way you are supposed to live anyway.

It does not make him better off if you improve the way you are living.

4God would not be punishing you in this way if you truly honored him.

God would not judge you to be guilty for doing that.

5No, God must be punishing you because you are very wicked.

You must have done a great number of evil things.

6You must have unfairly forced poor people to give you things to guarantee that they would pay money back to you.

You must have taken the cloaks that they needed to keep them warm.

7You must not have given water to people who were thirsty.

You must not have given food to people who were hungry.

8You must have refused to help others even though you were a wealthy man who owned a lot of land.

You must have enjoyed a life of privilege {without being concerned for others}.

9When widows came to you for help, you must have sent them away without giving them anything.

You must have oppressed orphans.

10Because you did all those things, now you are having difficulties in many different areas of your life.

Things are happening all of a sudden that scare you.

11And so you do not know what to do, as if it had become very dark and you could not see anything.

You cannot solve your problems; it is as if you were drowning in a flood of water.

12But God lives high up in the heavens.

He looks at the earth from a place that is even higher than the stars.

13So you should not say, ‘God does not know what people are doing.’

You should not say, ‘Dark clouds keep him from seeing us, so he cannot judge us.’

14You should not say, ‘Since he walks on the dome that covers the sky,

where there are thick clouds around him, and he can not see what we do.’

15You should not continue to conduct your life

in the way that evil people have done for many years.

16God makes evil people die suddenly while they are still young.

They go away completely, as if a flood had swept them away.

17Those evil people told God, ‘Leave us alone!’

They also said defiantly, ‘Shaddai can do nothing to harm us!’

18Even so, God mercifully gave them many things to enjoy.

Nevertheless, I want to think completely differently from the way evil people think.

19When good people see that God punishes evil people, they are glad.

People who have not done wrong say that those evil people are getting what they deserve.

20Those good people say, ‘Now God has destroyed our enemies!

It is as if a fire has burned up everything they owned.’

21So, Job, I urge you to ask God to forgive you. Restore your relationship with him.

If you do that, good things will happen to you.

22Do pay attention to what God teaches you.

Meditate on what he says.

23If you come humbly to Shaddai, he will restore you.

{God will certainly do that} if you stop doing the evil things that you have been doing.

24Stop trusting in your wealth.

It should be as if you are throwing away your gold,

even the finest gold you have, onto the dirt and rocks.

25If you do that, then Shaddai will be more precious to you than your gold and your silver ever were.

26If you do that, then your relationship with Shaddai will make you very happy.

You will be able to approach God confidently.

27When you pray to God, he will do what you ask him to do.

You will have many things to praise God for.

28The things that you decide to do will be successful.

It will be as if a light were shining on the road in front of you so that you knew just where to walk.

29People may cause great difficulties for you.

But when you pray and humbly ask God to help you,

he will save you.

30God will even help people who have done wrong things if you pray for them.

God will answer your prayer because you will not have done wrong things.”

Chapter 23

1Then Job replied to Eliphaz and the others. He said,

2“I must still complain about many distressing things.

There is much more that I could have protested about.

3I wish that I knew where I could find God.

{If I knew that,} I would go to the place where he lives.

4I would present much evidence to God that I am innocent.

I would offer many arguments to prove that.

5That way I would know what God would say

in reply to everything I would say to him.

6He would not use his great power to defeat me.

He would listen to me fairly.

7I am an honest man, so if I met with God personally, I would be able to discuss things with him reasonably.

{If we could do that,} he would declare that I am innocent.

After that, he would not punish me again as if I had sinned.

8{But I do not know where to find God.}

If I went to the east, he would not be there.

If I went to the west, I would not see him there.

9He makes natural things happen beautifully in the north,

but no one there sees him doing those things.

He must also go to the south,

but no one sees him there either.

10Still, he knows how I have conducted my life.

When he has finished testing me,

he will see that I am as pure as gold whose impurities fire has burned out.

11I have lived faithfully in the manner that God wants people to live.

I have not stopped living that way.

12I have always obeyed the commandments that he has given.

I would rather go without food than disobey what God has told us to do.

13But God seems to have made up his mind that I am a sinner,

and no one can make God change his mind.

Whatever he wants to do, he does.

14So it seems that God will keep on punishing me until I die.

If my present troubles do not kill me, I am sure that God will cause many more troubles for me!

15So the thought of coming into his presence greatly frightens me.

When I think about what he can do, that makes me very afraid of him.

16I am afraid because I am no longer brave after what God has done to me.

Shaddai has made me very frightened.

17I have lived to experience terrible things, and that is why I am so frightened.

I can only imagine that the future will be just as bad as the present.

Chapter 24

1Shaddai should set times when he judges evil people.

The people who obey God never seem to see him judge evil people.

2Some evil people remove boundary markers so that they can steal other people's land.

Some evil people steal other people's sheep and put them in with their own sheep.

3Some evil people take away donkeys that belong to children who have no fathers to protect them.

They make loans to widows, and then they take oxen that belong to them to guarantee that the widows will pay back the money.

{But without the oxen, the widows cannot grow crops, so they cannot repay the loans, and the evil people keep the oxen.}

4Poor people do not want evil people to know where they are, so they do not walk on the main roads.

Poor people stay in hiding places in order to avoid evil people.

5In fact, poor people have to search in the desert plain for food to feed their children,

as if they were wild donkeys.

6The poor people pick up leftover grain in other people's fields.

They gather leftover grapes from vineyards that evil people own.

7During the night they do not have thick garments to cover their bodies,

so they are not able to stay warm.

8{Poor people have no homes, so} when rain showers come from the mountains, they get very wet.

They have to huddle under rock ledges to shelter themselves from the rain.

9Some evil people even take babies away from their mothers while they are nursing!

They take the babies as a guarantee that their mothers will repay money that they have lent them.

10Poor people do not have adequate clothing.

They also do not have adequate food,

even though they carry around bundles of grain because they work to bring in other people's harvests.

11Evil people hire poor people to make oil from olives that grow on olive trees on their property.

The evil people also hire poor people to tread on grapes that grow on their vines to make juice for wine.

But they do not allow the poor people to drink any of the wine when they are thirsty.

12In the cities, poor people groan because they are suffering.

People whom evil people have wounded cry out to God for help.

But God does not seem to care about what the evil people are doing to them.

13These evil people are like others who do not obey God.

They do not try to understand what God wants or to do it.

14Murderers go out in the dim light of morning so they can kill vulnerable people {without being caught}.

They are like thieves who steal things in the dark of night {in order to avoid being caught}.

15Men who want to commit adultery watch for evening to come.

They say, 'I am going to make sure that no one recognizes me,' and they disguise themselves.

16During the night, robbers find ways to get into other people's houses and steal things.

But during the day, they stay in their own homes.

They do not like being out where it is light.

17These evil people all stay at home during the day because morning is as scary for them as the dark of night is for other people.

They stay up at night because they like being awake at night when things happen that terrify others.

18However, those wicked people will not live long lives.

God will keep anything from growing on the land that they own.

No one will go and work in their vineyards.

19Just as water from melting snow dries up when it is hot and there is no rain,

those evil people will go to the place where dead people go.

20When they die, maggots will eat their corpses,

and no one will remember them.

Even their mothers will forget about them!

Those wicked people will be like trees that fall down and rot.

21Those evil people mistreat women who do not have children to care for them.

Those evil people never help widows.

22But God, by his power, gets rid of people who hurt others because they are stronger than those others.

When it is clear that God is going to punish those evil people, they know that they are going to die.

23God allows them to think that they are secure, and so they do not worry,

but God is carefully watching how they live.

24Those evil people may prosper for a little while,

but suddenly they will be gone.

God will show that they were not greater than others.

God will make them die like all other people.

Then they will be like stalks of grain that farmers have cut off.

25What I have said is certainly true.

Now that I have explained it,

there is no one who can show that I am a liar

and prove me wrong.”

Chapter 25

1Then Bildad, Job’s friend from the Shuhite people group, responded to Job. He said,

2“God is very powerful.

Everyone should honor him greatly.

God causes everything to be orderly high up in heaven.

3No one can count all the stars in the sky.

When the sun rises, it shines on everyone.

4Since God is so great, no person can be righteous compared with him.

No human being is innocent by his standards.

5Consider this: God is so glorious that he does not even consider the full moon to be bright!

Even the white light of the stars does not seem pure to him.

6So God would certainly not consider mortal humans to be pure!”

Chapter 26

1Then Job replied to Bildad and the others. He said,

2"I am struggling, but you have not really helped me.

I am not able to overcome my difficulties, but you have not rescued me.

3I need good advice, but you have not given me any.

You have said many things, but they have not been helpful.

4I suppose you think that God helped you tell me important things.

But God was not really speaking through you.

5{Let me tell you how great God really is.}

The spirits of dead people tremble with fear at God.

They are deep in the earth,

below the waters where the sea creatures live.

6God knows all about those who are in the place where dead people go.

Nothing prevents God from seeing what is there.

7God created the dome of the sky to make an orderly world.

God created the dry land where previously there was nowhere for people to live.

8God uses clouds as containers for rainwater,

and he prevents that water from bursting the clouds.

9God can make clouds so thick that even the bright moon cannot shine through them.

10God has set the horizon in place as the outer edge of the oceans.

The horizon is at the place where the sky meets the earth.

11Sometimes even the mountains that hold up the sky shake,

as if God were scolding them and they were afraid.

12God used his power to restrain the oceans;

by his skill he destroyed Rahab, the huge sea monster.

13God can make the sky clear by blowing away the clouds.

{God brings order everywhere in creation} by overcoming the forces of chaos.

14But I have described only a little bit of what God does.

It is as if we can only hear someone whisper about him.

When we hear mighty thunder, we realize that God is far too great for us to understand.

Chapter 27

1Job kept speaking to his three friends. He said,

2"I will promise you something as surely as God exists, even though he has treated me unfairly.

I will promise you something as surely as Shaddai exists, even though he has made my life so unpleasant.

3I will insist on it for as long as I am alive.

Yes, for as long as I am still breathing, I will insist on it.

4I promise that I will not say the wrong thing!

I promise that I will not say anything to deceive anyone!

5And so I will never say that what you three have said about me is true.

Until the day that I die, I will insist that I have been living as God wants people to live.

6I will insist that I am innocent. I will never say anything different.

That way, for as long as I live, I will not feel badly about saying something that was not true.

7I want to be just the opposite of an evil person.

I want to disagree with the way anyone who is a bad person is living.

8I want to be the opposite of an evil person because

when God decides it is time for that person to die,

he can only expect that God will then punish him for the wrong things that he has done.

9When evil people are in trouble,

God does not rescue them when they pray for help.

10Evil people are not happy about what Shaddai does.

They do not speak with God in prayer in good times as well as in bad times.

11I need to teach you three something

about how God actually deals with the people of this world.

12You three have certainly seen for yourselves how God treats people.

So you should not have been telling me things that have made so little sense.

13I will tell you how God punishes evil people.

This is what Shaddai does to those who mistreat others:

14Even if they have many children, those children will die in wars,

or they will die because they do not have enough food to eat.

15Any children who are still alive after their evil parents die will perish from diseases.

Not even the wife of an evil man will mourn for him if he dies.

16Sometimes evil people accumulate a large amount of money

and they acquire many valuable articles of clothing.

17But even if evil people become rich, they will die,

and then righteous people will get their clothes.

Honest people will get their money and share it with one another.

18The houses that they build are as weak as spider webs.

Their houses are flimsy, like the huts that watchmen live in while they guard people's fields.

19God makes evil people lose their money.

It is as if they are rich when they go to bed one night,

but the next morning they wake up to find that their money is all gone.

20When evil people realize that God is punishing them,

they become very afraid, as if those fears were water in which they were drowning.

God soon destroys the evil people, as if a whirlwind carried them away in the night.

21It is as if a windstorm from the desert picks them up and carries them away from their homes.

No one ever sees them again.

22It is as if a wind like that blows steadily against them

while they are running away, trying to escape from its force.

23It is as if such a wind were clapping its hands at them to mock them.

It is as if such a wind blew them out of their houses and stayed there laughing at them.

Chapter 28

1"There certainly are places where people dig to find silver.

There certainly are places where people refine gold that they have dug from the ground.

2People get iron from ore that they dig out of the ground.

They get copper by heating and melting ore that contains it.

3People use lamps so that they can see while they work far down under the ground.

They search for ore in many places where it is very dark.

4People dig shafts deep into the ground in places that are far from where other people live,

As they work underground, the people who walk above them are not aware of them.

People have to climb down ropes in order to descend into the deep shafts they have dug.

5Food grows on the surface of the ground.

But deep below the ground, miners make fires to break apart the rocks.

6The stones that people dig from under the ground contain sapphires.

The dirt they dig up contains bits of gold.

7Even birds that have very good eyesight can not see deep down into these mines.

Even birds such as falcons have not looked into them.

8Strong beasts can go wherever they want, but they have never gone to those places.

Not even lions have gone there.

9Miners dig through even very hard rock.

It is as though they are turning mountains upside down in order to get at the ore that is at the bases of them.

10Miners cut tunnels through rocks

in order to find many precious things.

11They dam up small streams to stop the water from flowing.

That allows them to find things that were hidden beneath the water of the streams.

12{It takes great effort to find valuable ore.} It is even more difficult to obtain wisdom.

Yes, it is very difficult to obtain understanding.

13Humans do not know how to obtain wisdom.

Wisdom is not available on earth, where people live.

14It is as though the ocean depths and the water of the seas said,

‘There is no wisdom here!’

15People can not buy wisdom

by paying for it with gold or silver.

16Wisdom is worth much more than fine gold that comes from the land of Ophir.

{Wisdom is worth much more} than very valuable stones.

17Wisdom is worth much more than gold or beautiful quartz.

It is more expensive than an article made of pure gold.

18Wisdom is worth more than coral or jasper.

The price of wisdom is higher than the price of rubies.

19Wisdom is worth more than topaz from the land of Cush.

One can not express the value of wisdom even in terms of gold.

20So, then, wisdom is very difficult to obtain;

understanding is indeed a very valuable thing to get.

21Living creatures are not able to see it.

Not even the birds can see it while they are up in the sky.

22Even after people die, they do not have a better experience of wisdom

in the different place to which they go.

23God is the only one who knows how people can become wise.

24God knows this because he can see everything on earth, even in its most remote places.

God can see everything that is below the sky.

25He decided how strongly the winds should blow

and how much rain should be in the clouds.

26God decided where rain should fall

and what path lightning should take from the clouds down to the ground.

27At that time, he identified wisdom and recognized that it was very valuable.

He was delighted by its capabilities and made it a permanent part of his creation.

28Then God told human beings, ‘Listen! You will become wise to the extent that you respect me.

If you want to understand what you should do, you must first decide that you will not do anything wicked.’

Chapter 29

1Job kept speaking to his three friends. He said,

2“I wish that I could be as I was previously

during the time when God was taking care of me.

3During that time, it was if God was shining a light on me

so that I could see where I was going even in the darkness.

4At that time I was young and strong.

Because God was my friend, he protected where I lived.

5Shaddai was still present with me during that time

when all my children were still alive and living near me.

6My herds provided me with plenty of milk.

My olive trees provided me with plenty of oil.

7I used to go to the place where the elders gathered at the city gate.

The people had reserved a seat for me there, and I would sit in it.

8When young men saw me, they stepped aside respectfully.

When older men saw me, they stood up respectfully.

9The leaders of the people used to stop talking when I arrived.

They made sure they did not say anything{, because they knew it would not be as good as what I was going to say}.

10Even the most important leaders became quiet.

It was as if they were not even able to speak.

11When people heard what I had to say,

they said good things about me.

They recognized that I had given wise counsel, and they approved of me

12{They approved of me} because I had helped those who were poor and who were calling for help.

{They also approved of me because} I aided orphans who had no fathers to help them.

13People who had been suffering and were about to die praised me {for rescuing them}.

I made widows very happy by helping them.

14It was in my character to make sure that I and others did what was right.

Yes, it was in my character to make sure that people treated one another in a way that was just.

15I helped people who could not see, as if I were seeing for them.

I helped people who could not walk, as if I were walking for them.

16I protected poor people the way a father protects his children.

In the courts, I defended even people who were strangers to me.

17I made wicked people stop oppressing others.

It was as if I were breaking the jaws of a wild animal

to make it drop its victim from its teeth.

18At that time I thought, 'I am certainly going to live a long life,

and then I will die at home with my family.

19I am like a tree whose roots reach down into the water

and whose branches become wet with dew each night.

20People continually honor me,

and I stay strong like a new bow.'

21When I spoke, people waited to hear what I would say.

They remained silent until I advised them what they should do.

22After I finished speaking, they did not say anything,

because what I had said was so satisfying.

23They were as eager to hear me speak as farmers are for it to rain.

They listened to me with great appreciation, just as the ground seems to welcome the rain that falls in the spring.

24I helped people who felt discouraged.

I remained cheerful even as I helped them deal with difficult situations.

25As their leader, I decided what things would be good for them to do.

They respected me, just as soldiers respect the king who commands their army.

I was kind and sympathetic, like someone who comforts people who are mourning.

Chapter 30

1"But now, men who are younger than I am make fun of me.

They are men whose fathers I would not even have hired to help my dogs guard my sheep!

2And I would not hire any of those young men to work for me either.

They are already feeble.

3{No one hires them,} so they are poor and go hungry and have become thin.

They have to eat roots

that they find in places where no crops have grown for a long time.

4They look among bushes to find leaves that they can eat.

They pull up broom trees and eat their roots.

5{When they come near villages,}

people shout at them, as they would at a thief,

to make them leave their area.

6They have to live in riverbeds,

in holes in the ground,

and in caves on the sides of cliffs.

7{During the day} they huddle under thorn bushes.

There they howl like animals because they are so hungry.

8They are people without good sense,

and they have never achieved anything significant.

People force them to leave their towns.

9But these despicable young men sing songs to make fun of me!

If they think God is punishing someone for being a sinner, they call that person ‘another Job.’

10They hate me and they stay away from me,

but if we happen to meet, they spit right in my face.

11I am not able to defend myself against these young men, because God has taken away my strength.

He has humiliated me.

So they can do whatever they want to me.

12Gangs of these young men threaten me.

They shove me aside when they pass by.

They think of new ways to hurt me.

13I am not able to escape from them,

even as they keep doing worse things to me.

No one else would do the things they do to me.

14It is as if I were a city and they were an army that had broken through its wall

and sent in waves of troops to destroy the city.

15I am afraid of many things.

I have no dignity left,

and I do not expect that I will ever get out of this situation.

16I feel as if I am about to die,

but in the meantime, I am suffering greatly.

17My body aches during the night.

I feel pain continually.

18I have such a serious disease that my skin no longer looks the same.

It seems as if I will always be sick.

19God has made me suffer so much that I have been sitting here on the ground.

I am even beginning to look like the dust and ashes in which I have been sitting.

20Even though I pray to you, God, you do not respond.

I try to get your attention, but you do not do anything to help me.

21You used to be kind to me, but you are not kind to me anymore.

You are using your mighty power to make me suffer.

22It is as if you have sent a great wind to pick me up and carry me away.

It is as if you are making a violent storm blow me around.

23Certainly I know that you are going to make me die.

That is what happens to everyone who ever lives.

24However, when someone falls down, he certainly reaches out with his hand for help.

When someone is in trouble, he certainly calls for help.

25{So it is appropriate for me to ask for your help now, God.}

After all, I wept for people myself when they were experiencing troubles.

I felt sorry for poor people.

26I am asking for help because although I expected good things to happen to me, evil things happened instead.

It was as if I was waiting for dawn but another night started instead of a new day.

27I am very distressed all the time.

I suffer during every day.

28I look as if I have to work outside all day to make a living.

I humble myself by pleading openly for people to help me.

29{No one wants to come near me.}

It is as if I am a jackal or ostrich living out in the wilderness.

30My skin has become dark, and it is peeling off.

I have a fever that causes my body to feel as if it were burning up.

31Previously, if you came to my house, you would hear musical instruments playing happy songs.

If you came now, you would only hear people crying and singing sad songs.

Chapter 31

1"I have made a solemn promise to myself that I will not look at a woman in a lustful way.

So I would not look at a woman who was not my wife and want to have sexual relations with her.

2{If I did not do what I promised,}

God who is in heaven would certainly punish me.

Shaddai in heaven would make sure that I got what I deserved.

3{I would not have done wrong in that way, because I know that} unrighteous people experience calamities.

People who do what is wrong experience disasters {when God punishes them}.

4I know that God sees everything that I do.

He is aware of each individual action that I take.

5I solemnly declare that I have not lied to others

and that I have not tried to deceive others.

6I only ask God to judge me fairly.

If he does that, he will find that I am innocent.

7I solemnly declare that I have continually acted properly.

I have not seen wrong things to do and then done them.

I am not guilty of committing sin.

8If I have been lustful or deceptive, I hope that when I plant seeds, someone else will harvest the crops and eat them.

Or may someone uproot the crops that are growing in my fields!

9I solemnly declare that I have not been attracted to another man's wife.

I have not made secret arrangements with a woman to have sexual relations with her while her husband was away.

10If I have done that, I hope that my own wife will be attracted to another man

and that she will have sexual relations with him.

11If I had sexual relations with another man's wife, that would be a terrible sin.

If I were caught and her husband brought me to court, the judges would certainly decide to punish me.

12{I would have to pay a fine that would cost me everything I owned.}

It would be as if a fire had burned everything I had right to the ground.

It would be as if someone pulled out all the crops that were growing in my fields.

13I solemnly declare that when my male or female servants complained to me about something,

I took their complaint seriously and made sure that I treated them fairly.

14I knew that if I did not treat my servants fairly,

I could not expect God to be merciful to me when he judged me.

If God came to help my servants,

I could offer no excuse for the way I had treated them. **15**{I am no different from my servants, so I have no right to mistreat them.}

The same God created each one of us.

16-18I solemnly declare that from the time that I was young,

I have taken care of orphans and I have protected widows.

I have not failed to provide poor people with the things that they needed.

I have not caused widows to lose hope.

I have not eaten all of my food by myself and not shared it with orphans.

19I solemnly declare that I provided clothes for poor people when I saw that they were suffering from lack of clothing.

I have provided warm outer garments for needy people.

20I gave them warm clothes that my servants had woven from the wool of my sheep.

The poor people thanked me for helping them.

21I solemnly declare that I never threatened an orphan who brought a case against me in the public square.

Even if I knew that the other elders would favor me,

I made sure that the orphan received fair treatment.

22If I have neglected poor people or oppressed orphans,

may the arm {that I did not use to help them but used instead to threaten them}

fall right out of its socket!

23I have not done wrong things such as I have been describing,

because I respect God and I know that he punishes sin.

I would not sin against such a majestic God!

24I solemnly declare that I have not depended on wealth

as a source of security and power.

25I solemnly declare that I did not think that I was better than other people

because I had many possessions and because I had become very rich.

26I solemnly declare that I never looked at the sun when it was shining

or at the beautiful moon

27and made a gesture to worship them.

I never wanted to do that.

28If I had worshiped the sun or the moon and people found out that I had,

the judges would certainly decide to punish me for that too,

because I would have been worshiping a false god instead of the true God.

29-30I solemnly declare that I have not been glad when my enemies have suffered misfortunes.

I have not thought that I was better than they were when they experienced disasters.

I have not sinned by praying that God would curse people who hated me

and cause them to die.

31-32I solemnly declare that I have invited travelers to stay in my house.

Visitors have not had to sleep in the streets.

My servants talk about how I give food to anyone who needs it.

33I know that people generally try to hide their sins.

But I solemnly declare that I have not done that.

34I did not let fear of what people would say about me or think of me

keep me from admitting that I had done wrong and making amends.

35I wish that I had someone who would judge my case against God!

I hereby declare that all that I have just said is true.

Now I wish that Shaddai would state his case.

I would like to see his written statement of charges against me.

36If Shaddai wrote out his charges against me,

I would not be ashamed, because I know that I am innocent.

I would display the charges publicly{, because they would actually list what I had not done}.

37I would explain to God in detail

how I was innocent of each charge.

I would approach him as a ruler would: without being afraid.

38I solemnly declare that I have not defrauded the people who farm my land.

They have no reason to cry out for justice against me.

39I solemnly declare that I have taken only a fair share of the crops that people have grown on my land.

I have made sure that the people who grew crops on my land kept enough of them to feed their families.

40If I have cheated the people who farm my land,

then I wish that thorns would grow in my fields instead of wheat.

I wish that bad weeds would grow there instead of barley!”

After this, Job said nothing further to defend himself to his three friends.

Chapter 32

1Then Job’s three friends stopped replying to him, because Job was confident that he was innocent. **2**Then a man named Elihu{, who had been listening as Job spoke with his friends,} became very angry with Job. Elihu was the son of Barakel. He was from the Buzite people group. He belonged to the clan of Ram. He became angry because Job continued to claim that he was innocent and that God had been wrong to punish him. **3**Elihu also became angry with Job’s three friends. He became angry because they had insisted that Job must have done many things that were wrong, but they had not been able to prove any of their accusations. **4**Now Elihu was much younger than Job’s three friends. That was why he had let them speak to Job first. **5**But when Elihu realized that the three men had nothing more to say to Job, he became very angry.

6This is what Elihu said. (He was the son of Barakel. He was from the Buzite people group.)

“I am young, and you all are much older than I am.

So I was hesitant. I was afraid to tell you what I was thinking.

7I said to myself, ‘I should let the people who are older speak.

Older people should be able to explain how to understand things wisely.’

8However, even as I was saying that, I felt the Spirit of God stirring within me.

Yes, I felt Shaddai inspiring me so that I could understand.

9Humble people can also be wise.

Younger people can also recognize the right thing to do.

10So now I want to ask you, ‘Please listen to me.

Let me too say what I have been thinking.’

11Now I let the three of you speak first.

I waited while you thought carefully about what you should say,

and I listened to your arguments.

12I paid careful attention to what you were saying.

But in the end, none of you was able to prove that what Job said was wrong.

None of you could respond to his arguments.

13So do not tell yourselves, ‘We have discovered what is wise!’

It is God who must show Job that he is wrong.

Someone relying on human thinking will not be able to do that.

14You were angry with Job, and so you have not answered him well.

But Job has said nothing to make me angry, so I will not answer him the way you have.

15The three of you are just sitting there in a daze, not saying anything more,

because you cannot think of what to say to Job.

16And since you are not speaking, since you have stopped answering Job,

I do not feel that I need to wait any longer before speaking to Job myself.

17So now I too will respond to Job.

I will share my view of his situation.

18I must speak, because I have plenty to say,

and something inside me is forcing me to say it.

19I feel as if I am a container of wine that is stretching more and more

and that will soon burst because of the fermentation.

20I must speak, and then I will be able to rest from the effort of restraining myself from speaking.

So I will now say something in reply to all of you.

21I will not favor either Job or you his friends.

I will not try to flatter anyone.

22Indeed, I have not gotten into the habit of flattering people,

because I believe that if I did that, God would quickly destroy me.

Chapter 33

1So now, Job, I ask you to listen carefully

to everything that I am going to say.

2I am ready to speak to you and tell you what I think.

3What I say will express my sincere feelings of concern for you.

I will only tell you what is genuinely true.

4You can trust me as someone whom God's Spirit created.

You can trust me as someone whom Shaddai made alive.

5{Once I have spoken,} respond to me if you can.

Think carefully about how you will reply to me.

6Now you wanted God to answer you, and I will do that for him.

But I am human, just like you,

7so you do not need to be afraid of me.

I will not speak to you harshly.

8I listened carefully to you as you spoke,

and this is what I heard you say:

9'I am righteous. I have not committed any sins.

I am innocent. I have not done things that are wrong.

10Nevertheless, God looks for excuses to punish me.

He treats me as if I were his enemy.

11He judges me by very strict standards.

He closely observes everything that I do.'

12However, what you have said is incorrect.

I will explain why.

{You do not realize what God is actually doing, since} it is beyond human understanding.

13You should not be protesting that God does not respond to what anyone says.

14God actually does speak to people in various ways.

People just do not realize how he is doing that.

15Sometimes God speaks to people at night in dreams and visions

when they are sound asleep in bed.

16God reveals things to people at those times.

He shows them that they need to change the way that they have been living.

17God speaks in that way to get people to stop doing evil deeds.

God wants to prevent people from sinning because they have become proud.

18In this way, God prevents people from dying.

Otherwise, someone might kill them violently.

19God also corrects people by making them so ill that they have to lie in bed.

They feel constant agony in their bodies.

20They feel so sick that they do not want to eat anything,

not even their favorite foods.

21They lose so much weight that there appears to be no flesh between their skin and their bones.

22They become so sick that they are about to die.

The angels who cause people to die start coming to get them.

23However, sometimes a special kind of angel may come to a person

and tell him on behalf of God how he can change the way that he has been living so that he will not die.

24{If the person changes the way that he has been living,}

then God will forgive him.

God will tell the angels who cause people to die,

‘Do not cause this person to die!

I can see that I should allow him to live, because now he will do what is right.’

25When that happens, the person will become healthy again and his skin will appear as fresh as the skin of a child.

He will be as strong again as he was when he was young.

26Then God will once again treat him as a righteous person.

He will pray to God, and God will answer his prayer.

He will come into God’s presence joyfully.

27He will sing a song of thanksgiving and tell the people who are listening,

‘I sinned; yes, I did things that were not right,

but God did not punish me in the way that I deserved.

28He has saved me from going to the place where dead people are.

And so I will continue to enjoy being alive!’

29Indeed, God does this for many people.

30He keeps them from going to the place where dead people are.

That way they can continue to enjoy being alive.

31So Job, please listen to me.

Do not say anything right now; just allow me to speak.

32{After I have spoken, then} if you have something more that you want to say to me,

say it, because I would like to show that you are innocent.

33However, if you have nothing more that you want to say, then just listen to me.

I will explain to you how you can understand your situation in a wise way.”

Chapter 34

1Then Elihu continued to speak, and he said,

2“I want everyone who is wise to hear what I am about to say.

I want everyone who knows a lot to listen to me.

3I want you to listen carefully to me because when people hear others speak,

they need to decide whether what the others are saying is right or wrong.

They do this just as people taste food to decide whether it is good or bad.

4I would like all of us to decide together who is right, Job or his friends.

I would like us to find out together what is a good way to understand his situation.

5We need to consider this carefully together because Job has said, ‘I am innocent,

but God has not judged me fairly.’

6Job has said he would not lie about whether he has done what is right.

He has spoken as if God had shot him with an arrow and wounded him so badly that he will die,

even though he is innocent.

7I have not heard anyone else speak the way Job does.

People drink water to satisfy their thirst, and mocking God seems to satisfy Job.

8His friends are people who do what is wrong.

He spends time with wicked people.

9We know that this is true about him because he has said, ‘It is useless for people to want to please God.’

10So, all of you who understand things well, listen to me!

God would never consider doing anything that was wicked!

No, Shaddai would never consider doing anything that was wrong!

11We can be confident that God treats people fairly because we can see that he rewards or punishes people properly for what they have done.

God gives people what they deserve for the manner in which they have lived.

12No, God never does anything wicked.

Shaddai always treats people fairly.

13God did not need anyone to give him the authority to rule the people who live on the earth.

He did not need anyone to put him in control of all the people in the world.

14If God ever thought only about himself and not also about the world he created, if God ever stopped keeping people and animals alive,

15then every living thing would die immediately,

and the bodies of people would soon become soil again.

16So, Job, if you truly want to understand,

then listen carefully to what I am about to say.

17God could certainly not hate what is right and still rule the world.

So you really cannot say that God, who is righteous and powerful, has done something wrong.

18God tells some kings that they are worthless,

and he says to some officials that they are wicked.

19God does not treat rulers better than he treats other people.

God does not treat rich people more respectfully than he treats poor people.

After all, God created all people.

20If people use their power to oppress others,

God punishes them by killing them.

Those people are not expecting to have troubles and die, and humans do not kill them,

but God kills them very quickly.

21God punishes oppressive people because he sees everything that people do.

God is aware of each individual action that a person does.

22Wicked people can not escape from God
by hiding in places where it is very dark.
23Now God does not need to examine a person further
before passing judgment on that person.
24God does not need to investigate what people have done.
He knows whether important people have done wrong, and he destroys them if they have.
He then appoints others to take their places.
25Because he already knows what they have done,
he removes them quickly and gets rid of them.
26God kills them because of the wicked things that they have done.
Many people see him do it.
27God kills them because they stopped doing what he wanted them to do
and did not pay attention to his commands.
28They mistreated poor people.
Those poor people prayed to God for help,
and God answered their prayers.
29Yet even if God decides not to punish wicked people right away,
no one can criticize him.
If God does not reveal what he is doing,
no one can understand it.
God controls every nation and every person.
30God makes sure that those who rule honor him.
He makes sure that rulers do not oppress the people whom they rule.
31Suppose someone says to God,
‘I recognize that I am suffering because I have sinned.
I do not want to sin any longer.
32Please show me what sins I have committed.
I will stop doing anything that is evil.’
33If a person said that to God,
do you think that God would continue to punish him?
Now you have been saying that God does not treat people fairly,

so it is important for you to decide what you think God would do.

I will not suggest the answer myself.

We would like to hear you say what you think about this.

34{But unfortunately, I believe that} when people who have good sense

and people who are wise hear my question and your answer,

they will say to me,

35'Job is speaking ignorantly.

What he says does not make sense.'

36It would be good if God put Job on trial

and investigated every last detail of his case.

God should do that because Job has been speaking just as wicked people speak.

37God should put Job on trial because in addition to sinning,

he is saying that God does not treat people fairly.

Knowing that we were watching, he clapped his hands to insult God.

He has made long speeches to say that God has punished him unjustly."

Chapter 35

1Then Elihu continued to speak, and he said,

2"Job, it is not right for you to say that you have been doing what is right

but God has been doing what is wrong.

3You are basically saying that when you ask,

'What good things have I received because I have not sinned?

How am I better off than I would be if I had sinned?'

4I will answer those questions for you,

and I will also respond to what your three friends have said.

5Job, look up at the sky.

See how high the clouds are above you!

{God is far higher than that!}

6So if you sin, that does not harm God at all.

Even if you do many wrong things, that does not hurt him.

7On the other hand, if you do what is right, that does not make God better off.

No, you are not giving God something that he does not already have.

8The only ones who suffer if you are wicked are other people.

The only ones you might help by being good are other humans.

9People call for others to help them because of the many things that wicked people do that make them suffer.

They call for help because of the things that powerful people do to oppress them.

10But people do not ask God, their Creator, to help them.

People do not expect God to enable them to sing joyful songs because he has rescued them.

11People do not realize that God wants to teach them how to live wisely.

God does that for people, not for wild animals or for the birds in the sky.

12Even when people do pray to God for help,

God does not answer them,

because they arrogantly continue to do what is wrong.

13God, the Almighty One, does not respond at all

when people pray but do not really mean what they are saying.

14You are telling God that you have made your case against him

but that you are still waiting for him to answer your accusations.

You are saying that God has not been helping you.

Since you say those things, you should certainly not expect God to respond to you!

15You also say that God does not pay much attention when people commit sins,

and so he does not become angry and punish them.

16My friends, you see that Job has said things that are completely useless.

He says many things without knowing what he is talking about.”

Chapter 36

1Then Elihu said some more things to Job:

2“Job, be patient with me a little longer as I explain things to you.

Be patient, because I have more to say in order to show that God does not do anything wrong.

3I will tell you what I have learned from many sources.

I will show that God, who made me, always does what is right.

4You can indeed listen patiently because I will not say anything to you that is false.

I am here with you as someone who understands things well.

5Truly, God is very powerful, but he values every person.

He understands everything completely.

6He does not allow wicked people to remain alive,

but he helps people whom others have been oppressing.

7He always protects people who are righteous.

He makes them prosper as if they were kings,

and he causes others to honor them continually.

8Sometimes people suffer great troubles because they have done wrong things.

9When they do, God shows them what they have done wrong.

He shows them that they committed these sins because they were proud.

10He enables them to understand what he is teaching them.

He commands them to stop sinning.

11If they obey him and once again live as he wishes,

they will prosper and be happy for as long as they live.

12But if they do not obey him,

they will die violently

because they did not seek to understand how God wanted them to live.

13People who do not respect God continue to be angry with God.

They do not ask God to help them

even when they are suffering because of their sins.

14They can only make a living in a dishonorable way,

and they die while they are still young.

15God actually uses suffering to keep people from perishing because of their sins.

By making them suffer, he causes them to listen to what he is telling them.

16Job, I believe that God wants to bring you out of your troubles

and allow you to live without distress.

He wants you to be happy and prosperous.

17However, you are still saying bad things about God the way a wicked person would.

That is why God is punishing you so severely.

18You are angry with God, but do not let that lead you to say disrespectful things about God.

If you did that, God would not accept even a very large bribe to pardon you.

19God would not want your money and so pardon you.

He would not take gold or a great deal of money as a bribe.

20You should not wish that you could die so that your suffering would be over.

Once people die, they are gone.

21Be careful not to commit sin.

It seems that you would rather defy God than learn what he wants to teach you through suffering.

22Truly, God is so powerful that he can do great things.

He is better than any other teacher.

23No one has ever told him what he should do.

No one has ever had to tell him that what he was doing was wrong.

24People have often sung songs to praise him.

You too should remember what he has done and praise him for it.

25Everyone has seen what God has done,

but even so, people only understand it a little.

26How great God is! We are not able to understand how great he is,

and we are not able to determine how old he is.

27Indeed, God draws water up from the earth and puts it in clouds

and causes it to become rain.

28This rain pours down from the clouds

and abundant showers fall on the earth, where people live.

29No one can really understand how the clouds spread across the sky

or how it thunders in the sky where God lives.

30See how God causes lightning to flash all around him!

The lightning is so bright that it lights up even the deep ocean.

31Because his storms are so great, God uses them to punish wicked people.

But he also uses the rain from these storms to provide abundant food for righteous people.

32It is as if God picks up lightning in his hands

and sends it to strike where he wants it to.

33God makes thunder to announce that there will be a storm.

We also know that a storm is coming when we hear cattle making extra noise.

Chapter 37

1My heart really pounds when I think about that!

I feel as if it is jumping around inside me.

2Listen, all of you, to the thunder!

It is as if God is roaring!

3God makes such loud thunder that people can hear it throughout the land.

God makes such bright lighting that people can see it from far away.

4After lightning flashes, we hear thunder,

which sounds like God speaking very loudly.

Then, after the thunder, God makes more lightning.

5When we hear thunder, it is as if God is shouting in an amazing way.

God does things that are too wonderful for us to understand.

6For example, God can cause snow to cover the ground,

and when he tells a rain shower to rain even harder, it becomes a downpour.

7When God makes it rain so hard, everyone has to stop working outside.

This shows all people, whom he has made, what great things he is able to do.

8When it rains, the animals go into their hiding places

and they stay there until the rain stops.

9Storms come from the place where they start,

and cold winds come from the north.

10In the winter, cold winds turn water into ice.

The water in lakes freezes solid.

11God truly fills the clouds with water droplets.

He makes lightning flash from many clouds.

12He causes the clouds to move around over the places where people live

so that they can accomplish everything that he wants them to do.

13God may send storms to punish people.

God may send storms to water the land that he made.

God may send storms to help people by providing rain to make their crops grow.

God makes all of these things happen.

14Job, listen to what I am saying.

Just think about the wonderful things that God does.

15Are you able to explain how God arranges the clouds in the sky and makes lightning flash down from them?

16Are you able to explain how God is able to make clouds float in the sky?

Can you understand all of the wonderful things that God does?

God understands everything completely!

17Are you able to explain how God can bring in stifling air from the desert

and make it so hot that you cannot stay cool if you wear clothes?

18Are you able to explain how God made the sky

so that it would stay firmly in place above the earth?

19I doubt that you could tell us what to say to God.

People do not know enough to be able to defend themselves if they spoke with God.

20I would not dare tell God that I needed to speak with him!

If I did that, then he might destroy me!

21You know that people can not look directly at the sun

when it shines brightly in the sky after the wind has blown the clouds away.

22When God appears, he has glittering light all around him.

His glory is so bright that it makes us afraid.

{So if we cannot even look at the sun, how could we look at God?}

23Shaddai has very great power,

and we do not know how to get near to him.

He always acts righteously,

and he never mistreats anyone.

24That is why everyone should have great respect for him.

Any people who think that they are wise do not impress him.”

Chapter 38

1Then Yahweh spoke to Job from inside the storm that had been approaching. He said to him,

2“You have been speaking ignorantly, and as a result,

you have been making it harder for people to understand my actions.

3I am going to ask you some questions,

so get ready to answer them directly.

4Where were you when I began to create the earth?

Since you claim to know so much, tell me how I did that.

5Who decided how large the earth would be?

Who made sure that it was the right size?

If you know as much as you claim, you ought to be able to tell me that.

6-7 What keeps the earth from collapsing?

Who made sure that everything on the earth would be in the right position?

The earth was so beautiful when I made it that it was as if the first stars all sang a song to celebrate it.

All of the angels gave a great cheer when they saw the earth.

8When I made the land, the sea could have flowed over it.

Who prevented the sea from flooding the earth? **9**Now the clouds in the sky float over the sea as if they were its clothing.

Night and day happen at sea just as they do on land.

10I decided how much of the area under the sky the sea would cover.

I made barriers at the shore of the sea to keep it off the land.

11I proclaimed that the sea could only come up so far on the shore and not come any farther.

I said that its great waves could only flow up to a certain place on the land.

12Job, have you ever commanded a day to begin?

Have you told the sun where it needed to rise on a certain day?

13When day comes, wicked people all around the world

stop doing the bad things they do at night when no one can see them.

14In the light of day, people can see the hills and valleys on earth clearly.

The earth seems to take shape the way clay takes shape when people press a seal onto it

or the way folds form in clothing.

15When daylight comes, wicked people do not have the darkness that they like.

They are no longer able to hurt other people.

16Job, have you traveled to the springs at the bottom of the sea?

Have you gone and seen what is at the very bottom of the oceans?

17Has someone shown you how to get to the place where dead people are?

Do you know where the entrance to that dark place is?

18Do you know how big the earth is?

Tell me, if you know all these things!

19Do you know how to get to the place where light comes from?

Do you know where darkness comes from?

20Would you know how to get to those places

so that you could bring light and darkness to them?

21If you had been alive when I created the world, then you would know the answers to these questions.

But you are not that old, so you certainly do not know the answers.

22Have you gone into the place where I keep snow,

or have you visited the place where I keep hail?

23I keep snow and hail so that I can use them to defeat one of the armies

when people are fighting wars.

24Would you know how to get to the place where the sun should rise each morning?

Would you know where the east wind should begin to blow over the earth?

25Could you make rain fall in a certain place?

Could you make a rainstorm go in a certain direction

26so that it would rain out in the desert,

in a place where no one lives?

27Would you be able to send rain there to water those barren areas where nothing has grown,

so that grass would begin to grow again?

28Do you even know where rain comes from?

Do you know how dew forms on the ground overnight?

29Do you know how water becomes ice in the winter?

Do you know why dew turns into the frost that covers the ground in the winter?

30Do you know why the surface of lakes freezes in the winter?

You cannot see the water below the surface; it is as if there is a layer of stone on top of it.

31Can you make stars cluster together, as they do in the cluster you call the Pleiades?

Can you make stars move apart so that they no longer make constellations such as the one you call Orion? **32**Can you make the constellations of stars appear in the sky at the right time of the year?

Can you make the Big Dipper with its handle appear in the right place in the sky?

33Do you know how the sun, moon, and stars should move through the sky?

Do you know how they should provide heat and light on the earth?

34Could you shout an order up to a cloud

to make it pour rain down on you?

35Can you tell flashes of lightning to strike wherever you want?

Would the lightning do what you commanded?

36Can you determine where it should be cloudy and where it should be sunny?

37Are you able to count how many clouds there are?

Can you make it rain

38after it has not rained for such a long time

that the ground is hard and dry?

39-40 Suppose a lioness and her cubs were crouching in their den or hiding in some bushes, waiting for some animal to pass by that they could kill.

Could you make an animal go by that the lioness could kill

so that she and her cubs could eat the meat and not be hungry anymore?

41Suppose some baby ravens in a nest were chirping loudly because they were hungry.

Suppose they had not eaten in so long that they had become weak.

Could you provide a dead animal whose meat the raven could bring home to its baby birds?

Chapter 39

1Job, can you tell when female mountain goats are about to give birth?

Have you watched the wild deer while their calves were being born?

2Do you know for how long these female animals will be pregnant? Do you know when they will have their babies?

3They crouch down to give birth,

and their babies come out.

4The young animals grow up in the open fields.

Once they are strong enough to leave their mothers,

they do not return to them again.

5Do you know why some donkeys wander around wild?

Do you know why they are not still working for people?

6I have given them a home in the desert plain.

They are able to live in places where much grass does not grow.

7These wild donkeys do not like the noise in the cities.

In the desert, they do not have to listen to the shouts of those who used to force them to work.

8They wander over the hills to find food.

They look for any plant that they can eat.

9There are also oxen that are wild.

You could not get one of those to work for you!

It would not stay penned up at night by the place where you put food for your animals!

10You could not make a wild ox pull a plow

so that it would dig furrows in your fields.

11Even though a wild ox is very strong,

you could not depend on it to do difficult farm work.

12A wild ox would not help you

to grow more crops than you could grow by yourself.

13Now think about ostriches.

They run very fast, flapping their wings as they go.

But they do not take good care of their offspring.

14Female ostriches are bad mothers, because lay their eggs and leave them on the ground.

The eggs do stay warm in the sand.

15But this is still not a good thing to do.

Some wild animal could step on the eggs and crush them.

16Ostriches do not care well for their chicks.

They act as if the chicks do not belong to them.

They do not seem to be concerned that their chicks might die

and they would have laid their eggs for nothing.

17Ostriches act this way because I did not give them good instincts.

I did not enable them to understand how they should care for their eggs and chicks.

18However, ostriches are still awesome birds.

When they run, they can easily run faster than horses!

19But I made horses to be very strong.

I put beautiful flowing manes on their necks.

20I enabled them to leap through the air as if they were locusts.

They snort so loudly that they cause people to be afraid.

21As horses prepare to rush into battle,

they paw the ground, showing off their great strength.

22Horses seem to disregard danger as they go bravely into battle.

They do not run away when enemy soldiers attack them.

23As horses run into battle,

the quivers containing their riders' arrows rattle against their sides.

The spears and javelins that they are carrying flash in the sunlight.

24Horses rush into battle as soon as an officer blows a horn to signal that the army should advance.

The horses run very quickly, and they speedily reach the enemy lines.

25When they hear someone blow the battle horn, horses neigh excitedly.

They can smell a battle even from a distance.

They hear commanders shouting orders to their soldiers {and they know the battle will begin soon}.

26Now think about birds that hunt small animals and other birds.

Do you know how hawks are able to stay in the air as if they were floating?

Do you know how they sense when it is time to fly to a warmer place for the winter?

27I gave eagles the ability to fly high up into the cliffs and build their nests there.

28Eagles live on cliffs.

They are safe among the high, pointed rocks there because no animals can get to them.

29From that great height, eagles look for animals that they can kill and eat.

They can see animals that are far away.

30Eagles kill small animals and bring them back to their nests to feed their chicks.

Eagles also go and eat dead bodies that they see lying on the ground."

Chapter 40

1Yahweh continued to speak to Job. He said,

2"Do you still think I am wrong and want to keep arguing with me?

If you want to keep criticizing me, then answer the questions I have asked you!"

3But Job replied to Yahweh,

4"Now I realize how insignificant I am. I am not able to answer your questions.

I will not say anything in response to them.

5I have already said more than I should have said.

So now I will say nothing more.”

6Then Yahweh again spoke to Job from inside the storm. He said,

7“I am going to ask you some more questions, so get ready to answer them directly.

8Do you still want to govern the universe instead of me?

Do you still want to insist that I am doing things wrong and that you would do them right?

9Do you have the same amount of power as I do?

Does your voice sound as loud as thunder, as mine does?

10If you want to govern the universe, you must show that you are dignified and noble.

You must show that your character is glorious and beautiful.

11You must express holy wrath against the people who deserve it.

You must recognize which people are being sinfully arrogant and take them out of important positions.

12Yes, you must not allow arrogant people to remain in important positions.

Destroy wicked people quickly!

13Punish all of them by killing them.

Then send them to the place where dead people go.

14If you did that, I would congratulate you

and admit that you could save yourself by your own ability.

15{But to show you how insignificant you really are,}

I want you to think about a great animal that I created, Behemoth.

I made you, and I also made it.

Even though this great beast has the size and strength to hunt and kill other animals, it eats plants as oxen do.

16Think about how strong the legs of Behemoth are!

And the muscles in its belly are very powerful.

17Behemoth can make its tail as stiff as the branch of a cedar tree and hold it up in the air.

It has very strong legs.

18Its thigh bones are so strong that they are like tubes made of bronze.

Its legs are so strong that they are like bars made of iron.

19Behemoth is one of the strongest animals that I made.

I gave it sharp tusks so that it could cut down plants and eat them.

20It needs those tusks because it comes out of the river where it lives in order to eat the plants that grow nearby.

But other animals do not have to be afraid of it, so those animals do not run away or hide.

21Behemoth lies under the trees that grow near the river where it lives.

It sometimes shelters in the tall reeds that grow in the swamps of the river.

22Behemoth stays in the shade of trees that grow near the river.

It stays in the midst of the trees that grow near the water.

23Even when the river in which it lives become strong and turbulent, this does not disturb Behemoth.

It does not mind even if the level of the water in the river rises very high.

24No one could capture Behemoth even if he could get close enough to stand right in front of it.

No one can make Behemoth a tame animal.

Chapter 41

1{And now I want you to think about another great animal that I created, Leviathan.}

You cannot catch Leviathan with a fishhook,

and you cannot tie rope around its jaws to hold them closed!

2You cannot hook its jaws to catch it

and then put cords through its nose to control it.

3Leviathan would certainly not plead with you to act mercifully toward it!

It would not use sweet talk to try to get you not to harm it!

4Leviathan would certainly not make an agreement to work for you

as your slave for as long as it lived!

5You could not turn it into a pet, as people do with birds!

You could not put a leash around its neck so that the young women in your household could take it for walks!

6People who work together to catch fish could never catch Leviathan and then decide what share of it belonged to each of them.

They would never get the chance to cut Leviathan into pieces and then sell its meat!

7People cannot throw harpoons hard enough at Leviathan to pierce its hide!

People cannot throw fishing spears into its head!

8If you try to fight with Leviathan, it will give you a battle that you will never forget!

You will never try to do that again!

9It is useless even to hope to subdue Leviathan.

Just the sight of it is enough to make a person become so afraid that he falls down.

10No one is so foolhardy that he would wake up Leviathan if it were sleeping. {It would angrily attack him.}

Since that is true, it is even more foolhardy to challenge me{, as you have done}.

11{Even if people are righteous,} they have not done anything for me

that obligates me to make only good things happen to them.

Everything in the created world belongs to me{, so no one can give me anything that I have to repay.}

12And now I want to speak to you further.

{You said that you wanted to wake up Leviathan! As I said, that would be very foolish.}

It has agile legs and great strength and a graceful shape.

13It has a tough hide that no one can strip off.

It has powerful jaws.

14Those jaws have terrible teeth in them!

No one can pry them open when they are closed{, and no one can release them when they bite onto something.}

15It has rows of scales on its back

with no gaps between them.

16Those scales are so close together

that it seems as if not even air can get between them.

17Those scales join very closely to each other

and they do not pull apart.

18When Leviathan makes a loud sound, fire comes out of its mouth as well as noise.

It has bright, scary eyes that seem to glow with fire.

19When it breathes,

it shoots out flames and fiery sparks.

20Smoke pours out of its nostrils

the way steam pours out of a pot of boiling water over a hot fire.

21Flames shoot out from its mouth,

so when it breathes on wood, the wood catches fire.

22Its neck is very strong.

Wherever it goes, it makes people very afraid.

23Leviathan does not have a soft belly as other animals do.

Scales wrap around its belly and hold it tightly to its body.

24It does not feel any compassion,

any more than a stone would feel compassion

or the lower millstone on which people grind grain would feel compassion.

25When Leviathan rises up out of the ocean,

the bravest people become terrified.

When sailors see it churning up the water,

they sail away as fast as they can.

26People cannot injure it with swords.

They cannot injure it with spears, arrows, or other weapons that have sharp points, either.

27An iron weapon could not hurt it any more than straw could.

A bronze weapon could not hurt it any more than a weapon made of rotten wood.

28Shooting arrows at it does not cause it to flee.

Hurling stones at it from a sling is like hurling bits of chaff at it.

29A club that someone might use against it would not hurt it any more than chaff would.

It can ignore any spear that someone might throw at it.

30Scales as sharp as broken pieces of pottery cover its belly.

When it drags itself through the mud,

these scales tear up the ground.

31As it swims through the deep water of the ocean,

it churns it into foam,

as if it were boiling water or ointment that someone was stirring.

32As it swims through the water, it creates a glistening wake.

The churning water is like white hair on top of the deep sea.

33There is nothing in the world like Leviathan.

I created it in such a way that it would not be afraid of anything.

34Nothing else scares it, no matter how powerful that thing may be.

It is greater than the greatest of other creatures.”

Chapter 42

1Then Job replied to Yahweh. He said,

2“Now I realize that you can do anything you want.

No one can stop you from doing what you want to do.

3You told me that I had been speaking ignorantly, and that as a result, I was making it harder for people to understand your actions.

I will admit that I was speaking about things that I did not understand.

Those things were very amazing,

and I did not really know what I was talking about.

4You told me that I should listen and let you talk because you were going to ask me some questions. You wanted me to try to answer them.

{But I will admit that I am not able to answer the questions you asked.}

5I had previously heard many things about you.

But now I have actually seen you!

6Therefore I am ashamed of myself for what I said.

I am sitting in dust and ashes to show that I am sorry for what I said."

7When Yahweh had finished speaking with Job, he spoke to Eliphaz, Job's friend from the town of Teman. He said, "I am very angry with you and your two friends. I am angry because you did not say true things about me the way Job did. He serves me faithfully. **8**So now you must bring seven young bulls and seven rams to Job, that man who serves me faithfully. While he is with you, kill these animals and burn them as a sacrifice for yourselves. Then Job will pray for you, and I will do what he asks me to do for you. I will not punish you for speaking foolishly about me. You deserve for me to punish you because you did not say the right things about me as Job did. He serves me faithfully." **9**So Eliphaz, Job's friend from the town of Teman; Bildad, Job's friend from the Shuhite people group; and Zophar, Job's friend from the town of Naamah, did what Yahweh had commanded them to do. Then Job prayed for his friends, and Yahweh forgave them as Job asked him to do.

10After Job had prayed for his three friends, Yahweh healed him and made him wealthy again. Yahweh gave him twice as much wealth as he had before. **11**Then Job's family and friends came to his house and had a feast with him. All of his brothers and sisters came, and all of his former acquaintances also came. They cheered him up now that all of the troubles were over that Yahweh had allowed to happen to him. Each of them gave Job a valuable piece of silver and a gold earring.

12Yahweh blessed Job more in the second part of his life than he had blessed him in the first part of his life. Job acquired 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 pairs of oxen, and 1,000 female donkeys. **13**Job also had seven more sons and three more daughters. **14**He named the first daughter Jemimah. He named the second daughter Keziah. And he named the third daughter Keren Happuch. **15**Job's three daughters were the most beautiful women in the whole land of Uz. As their father, Job declared that his daughters would each receive an inheritance from him, just as their brothers would.

16After God restored Job's prosperity, he lived for 140 more years. His new children had children of their own. Then his grandchildren had children of their own, so Job was even able to get to know his great-grandchildren. **17**Job finally died after living a good long life.

Proverbs

Chapter 1

1{These are} the wise sayings said by Solomon. {He was} David's son and Israel's king.

2{These wise sayings are} for knowing what is wise and instructive.

{They are} for understanding insightful things that people say.

3{These wise sayings are} for instructing someone about what is insightful,

righteous, just, and honest.

4{They are} for making naive people prudent,

and {for making} young people knowledgeable and discreet.

5(Let wise people listen {to these wise sayings} and learn more.

Indeed, {let these sayings} guide understanding people so that they know what to do.)

6{These wise sayings are} for understanding wise sayings and parables.

{Indeed, they are for understanding} what wise people say and the riddles they tell.

7In order to become knowledgeable, a person must begin by deeply respecting Yahweh.

{But} foolish people detest what is wise or instructive.

8My child, listen carefully to what I, your father, am teaching you.

Indeed, obey the rules that your mother has commanded.

9{Obey your parents' teaching} because then {people will admire and respect you;} it will be as if those teachings were an attractive wreath on your head,

or beautiful necklaces around your neck.

10My child, if sinful people tempt you {to sin with them},

refuse {to do so}.

11Those sinful people may say, "Join us!

We will hide and wait in order to kill someone {who walks by}.

Indeed, we will hide ourselves in order to suddenly attack an innocent person for no good reason.

12We will kill living people completely, as if we were their grave.

{Yes, we will kill} healthy people, as if they could not escape dying.

13We will discover many valuable treasures!

We will fill our houses with what we steal!

14Join our gang!

We will share all the loot between us.”

15My child, do not associate with those sinful people!

Prevent yourself from doing the things that they do!

16{Avoid those sinners} because they are eager to do wicked things.

They even rush to murder people.

17It is useless {for a hunter} to put out a net {to trap a bird}

while the bird is watching {because the bird will avoid the net}.

18However, {these sinful people are more foolish than birds.} They hide in wait, but they kill themselves.

Indeed, they hide so that they can suddenly attack, but they themselves die.

19That is what happens to anyone who gains wealth in an unjust manner.

What they gained unjustly will kill them.

20Imagine that everything that is wise is a woman who calls out {to everyone} in public.

Imagine that this woman shouts {to people} in crowded places.

21Imagine that she calls out {to people} at the place where busy streets intersect.

Imagine that she speaks her {wise} words at the {crowded} entrance of the city gates.

22She says, “You naive people have loved being naive for too long!

You people who ridicule {others} have enjoyed ridiculing {others} to benefit yourselves for too long!

You foolish people have hated what you should know for too long!

23Turn around {and listen} to me when I correct you!

Listen! I will tell you all that I am thinking.

Indeed, I will help you to understand what I have to say to you.

24I called out {to you}, but you refused {to listen}.

Indeed, I invited you to come to me,

but no one paid any attention {to me}.

25You ignored everything that I advised you to do.

Indeed, you rejected what I said to correct you.

26Therefore, as for me, I will laugh at you when disastrous things happen to you.

Indeed, I will ridicule you when you are terrified.

27{Yes,} when you are terrified as if a violent storm has arrived,

{when} disastrous things happen to you violently,

{and} when you become distressed and anguished{, I will ridicule you}!

28At that time, those foolish people will cry out to me {to help them},

but I will not reply {to them}.

Indeed, they will desperately look for me,

but they will not be able to find me.

29{Those foolish people will not find me} because they refuse to learn.

Also, they have decided not to respect Yahweh.

30Those foolish people rejected what I advised them to do.

Indeed, they detested everything I said to correct them.

31Those foolish people will suffer rightly for what they have done.

Indeed, they will suffer fully for what they have planned.

32Ultimately, naive people will die because they refuse {to be wise}.

Indeed, being complacent will destroy foolish people.

33By contrast, people who listen attentively to what I say will live safely.

They will not fear that something evil might happen to them.”

Chapter 2

1My child, accept what I say.

Consider what I command {you} to be precious.

2{Do this by} listening carefully to what is wise,

{and by} thinking seriously about what you should understand.

3Yes, cry out {to God} for {him to show you} what you should perceive.

Call loudly {to God} for {him to teach you} what you should understand!

4Try to learn what is wise as eagerly as you would try to find silver.

Indeed, look for it as you would look for a treasure that someone has hidden.

5{If you do those things,} then you will understand how to reverently fear Yahweh.

{If you do those things,} then you will be able to know God.

6{This is} because Yahweh provides people with what is wise.

He tells them what they should know and understand.

7He gives what is truly wise to upright people.

He protects people who behave honestly.

8{He does these things} in order to guard those people who live justly.

Indeed, he keeps safe those people who are faithful to him.

9{If you listen to me,} then you will understand what is righteous, just, and honest—

all the best ways to behave.

10{This is because} you will truly know what is wise,

and knowing {what is wise} will please you.

11Being able to choose wisely will make you safe.

Indeed, being able to understand {what is happening around you} will make you secure.

12{Being wise like this} will keep you from doing wicked things,

{and you will stay away} from people who speak perversely.

13Those people refuse to behave righteously in order to behave wickedly.

14They gladly do what is wrong.

They enjoy doing things that are perverse and evil.

15They behave deceptively.

Indeed, they act deviously.

16{Being discreet and insightful} will protect you {also} from adulterous women.

{Being discreet and insightful will save you} from immoral women who speak {to you} seductively.

17Those women left the husbands they married when they were young.

They even forgot what they had promised to God {when they married}.

18{Being discreet and insightful will rescue you} because {going to} such a woman’s house will cause you to die.

Indeed, going with her is the same as going to the place where the spirits of dead people are.

19No man who acts adulterously with her will live again.

He will no longer be able to live in a way that results in life with God.

20Therefore, behave like a good person.

Indeed, conduct yourself like a righteous person.

21This is important because {only} people who live uprightly will live in our land,

Indeed, it is the people who do not act wickedly who will stay in this land for a long time.

22By contrast, Yahweh will remove people who act wickedly from our land.

Be sure of this: Yahweh will completely remove people who act treacherously from this land!

Chapter 3

1My child, remember the rules I have taught you!

Always be mindful to obey what I have commanded you!

2{Do this} because {obeying} what I have commanded you will help you live for a long time with many fulfilling and peaceful years.

3Always be faithful and trustworthy.

Let everyone see {how faithful and trustworthy you are, as if} they were a necklace you are wearing.

Remember to be faithful and trustworthy at all times.

4As a result of doing so, both God and people will approve of you and consider you an insightful person.

5Trust Yahweh completely,

and do not rely on what you understand.

6Let Yahweh lead you whenever you do anything.

As a result {of doing so}, he will show you what you should do.

7Do not think that you know what is best.

Instead, revere Yahweh and refuse to do what is evil.

8Doing so will make your body healthy.

Indeed, {doing so} will strengthen you from the inside.

9Revere Yahweh {by giving to him} some of your riches,

and {by giving to him} some of the first {crops} from everything that you harvest.

10{Doing so} will result in your places for storing crops becoming completely full {of crops}.

Even your containers for wine will overflow with fresh wine.

11My child, do not refuse to listen when Yahweh corrects you.

Do not be resentful even when he rebukes you.

12{Do not respond in that way} because Yahweh {only} reproves the people whom he loves,

just as a father reproves the children whom he cherishes.

13People who become wise are happy.

Indeed, the people who understand {Yahweh's world are the ones who} are truly happy.

14{This is} because being wise benefits people more than silver {could benefit them}.

Indeed, being wise is worth more to people than having gold.

15Being wise is more valuable than precious jewels.

There is nothing that you could desire that is worth as much as being wise.

16Being wise will help you live for a long time.

Being wise will help you become wealthy and honorable.

17Being wise will allow you to live pleasantly.

Indeed, in every way being wise will allow you to live peacefully.

18What is wise is {like} a tree {with fruit} that sustains the people who possess it,

People who are consistently wise live happily.

19Yahweh made the world through being wise.

Through being skillful, he made the sky and everything in it.

20Through knowing all things, Yahweh made water burst forth from deep {below the earth} and he made water fall from the clouds {above}.

21My child, always remember to do what is prudent and brings a good outcome.

Always be mindful to do those things.

22Doing so will give you a satisfying life

and people will honor and respect you.

23Doing what is prudent and good will {also} cause you to live safely.

They will keep you from making any serious mistakes.

24When you lie down {to sleep}, you will not fear anything.

You will lie down {to sleep} and sleep peacefully.

25Do not worry about something terrible suddenly happening {to you},

or about {what will happen} when God destroys wicked people.

26{Do not worry} because Yahweh will make you confident.

He will not allow people to harm you.

27Do not refrain from giving what is good to people who deserve it

when you are able to do so.

28When you are with a friend {who needs something}, and you have it with you, do not tell that person,

“Go away and come back tomorrow. I will give it to you then.”

29Do not plan to harm people that you interact with, because they live near you and they trust you.

30Do not argue needlessly with someone who has not harmed you.

31Do not envy violent people.

Do not imitate anything they do.

32{Do not do so} because Yahweh detests {such} people who act wickedly,

but he converses like a friend with people who act uprightly.

33Yahweh causes bad things to happen to the families of wicked people,

but he causes good things to happen to the families of righteous people.

34When people ridicule {others}, it is Yahweh who ridicules them,

but he kindly helps those who are humble.

35People will honor wise people,

but people will shame foolish people.

Chapter 4

1Children, listen carefully to what I, your father, am teaching you.

Pay attention in order to learn what you should understand.

2{Do this} because what I am teaching you is good.

{So} remember the rules that I am teaching you.

3When I was just a boy with my father,

{and} my mother's delicate, only son.

4During that time, my father taught me. He told me,

"Remember what I have told you!

Do what I have commanded you, so that you will keep on living!

5Learn what is wise and what you should understand!

Always remember and keep doing the things that I have said to you!

6Keep doing what is wise, because doing so will keep you safe.

Love doing what is wise, because being wise will protect you from harm.

7Being wise is the most important thing. {So} become wise!

{Even if} it costs you everything that you own, become a person who understands {God's world}!

8Prize what is wise, so that you will become great.

People will honor you when you value what is wise.

9Being wise will make you {respectable,} as though you had an attractive wreath on your head.

Indeed, being wise will make you {honorable,} as though you were wearing a magnificent crown."

10My child, listen attentively and accept what I say.

Doing so will increase the number of years that you live.

11I instructed you in how to act wisely.

I directed you in how to live in the right way.

12{If you follow my teaching,} nothing will hinder you {from succeeding}.

Indeed, if you attempt great things, you will do well.

13Consistently remember the things I have instructed you;

keep remembering them!

Always be mindful of them, because they will keep you alive.

14Do not do what wicked people do.

Indeed, do not behave in the way that evil people behave.

15Shun doing what is evil. Do not even consider doing it!

Refuse to act wickedly and do something else.

16{Do not act wickedly} because {it is as if} evil people cannot even sleep unless they have done something evil {on that day};

{it is as if} they cannot rest unless they hurt someone.

17{Do not act wickedly} because evil people do wicked things as if they were eating food;

they violently hurt others as if they were drinking wine.

18As for righteous people, they will live {wisely and safely} as people do who walk in the sunshine;

{they will live more and more wisely and safely,} just as the sun shines brighter and brighter until the brightest time of day.

19{But} the way that wicked people live is {dangerous,} like people {who walk} in total darkness.

{Like people walking in darkness do not know} what they trip over, wicked people do not know {what hurts them}.

20My child, pay attention to what I am saying to you!

Listen carefully to what I say!

21Keep thinking about what I say!

Fully commit yourself to remembering such things!

22{Do this} because those who live according to my words will have good lives,

and their whole bodies will be healthy.

23More than anything else, be extremely careful about what you think and desire,

because those things will control how you live.

24Do not say anything that deceives people.

Indeed, never say anything that misleads people.

25{Focus on doing what is right, like} someone who is always looking straight ahead.

Indeed, {act like} someone who is looking straight in front of himself.

26Plan carefully to do things in the right way.

As a result {of doing so}, you will succeed in everything that you do.

27Do not do anything other than what is right.

Prevent yourself from doing what is evil.

Chapter 5

1My son, pay attention to the wise things that I tell you!

Listen carefully to what I say you should understand!

2{Do this} so that you will be able to choose wisely {what to do},

and {so that} you will know the {right} things to say.

3{Do this} because what adulterous women say seems delightful like the tase of honey.

Yes, their words are more soothing than how olive oil feels on your skin.

4However, after being with such a woman you will be miserable, as if you had eaten a bitter plant.

{You will suffer} like a person whom someone has cut with a sharp, double-edged sword.

5{Being with} such a woman will cause both of you to die.

Indeed, what she does {with you} will cause you to become a dead person.

6She does not want to do what will cause her to live well.

She does not realize that she {lives precariously like someone who} is walking on a broken path.

7So now, children, pay attention to what I say!

Always remember what I have spoken to you!

8Stay far away from any adulterous woman!

Do not even go near the door of the place where such a woman dwells!

9If you go to such a woman, you will be giving the best efforts of your youth to others,

and a merciless person will take away {everything that you would gain in} the best time of your life.

10If you go to such a woman, people you do not know will satisfy themselves with {what you produced} when you were strong,

and an outsider will fill his house with what you labored to gain.

11Then you will groan when you are about to die

and have worn out your whole body.

12Then you will say, “I hated it extremely when people corrected me!

Indeed, I scorned people when they rebuked me!

13I did not obey the people who taught me.

Indeed, I did not listen carefully to the people who instructed me.

14My people are close to considering me as someone who has wasted his life.”

15{So be like} someone who only drinks water from his own well;

have sex with your wife only.

16{Do not be like} someone who lets his water run out into the streets;

never have sex with other women!

17Only have sex with your own wife!

Do not have sex with other women!

18{As a result,} may Yahweh bless your marriage {with children};

enjoy {sexually} the woman whom you married when you were young!

19{She is as beautiful as} a loving deer and a graceful mountain goat.

Let her breasts satisfy you always.

Constantly be exhilarated by how she loves you.

20My son, you should never be exhilarated by an adulterous woman!

You should never passionately caress an immoral woman!

21{Never do that} because Yahweh fully knows what people do.

Indeed, he knows everything that people do.

22The wicked things that wicked people do are {like} traps that catch them;

the sinful things that they do are {like} ropes by which others can grab them.

23Those wicked people will die because they did not discipline themselves.

They will do what kills them because they are extremely foolish.

Chapter 6

1My child, if you guarantee to pay a loan for someone you meet,

{that is, if} you agree to pay a loan for someone you do not know,

2{if in this way} you have said things that you regret

{because} it would be very difficult for you {to fulfill} what you promised,

3then, my child, do this in order to save yourself {from having to pay back this loan}:

humbly go to that person and beg him {to cancel what you have promised}, because he now controls you.

4Do not wait until tomorrow; {go immediately!}

do not allow yourself to rest {until you go and talk to him}.

5Save yourself {immediately},

as if you were a deer fleeing from a hunter

or a bird fleeing from a trapper.

6You lazy person, learn {something} from {watching} ants!

Consider what ants do so that you can be wise.

7Absolutely no one tells ants what to do.

8{Nevertheless,} they work hard all during the summer,

gathering and storing food {to eat during the winter}.

9{But} you lazy person, stop sleeping!

Wake up!

10{If you say to yourself,} “Let me sleep just a little more!

Let me lay my hands {across my chest} in order to rest comfortably for a little while longer!”

11Then {the result of being so lazy will be that} you will become poor and needy

just as surely as if a thief has robbed you.

12{I will describe for you what} worthless, sinful people {do. They} constantly deceive people by what they say.

13They make gestures, such as winking their eyes, signaling with their feet, and pointing their fingers {to communicate their evil plans to their friends}.

14They are always thinking perversely while planning how to do evil things.

They cause people to argue {with each other}.

15Because of this, disastrous things will suddenly happen to those people.

Someone will destroy them instantly and they will not be able to recover.

16Yahweh absolutely hates six, no, seven things:

17being proud, speaking falsely,

someone murdering a person who has not done anything wrong,

18someone planning ways to act sinfully,

someone eagerly looking for ways to act wickedly,

19someone who naturally lies when testifying,

and someone causing members of the same family to argue.

20My child, be mindful to obey what I, your father, have commanded {you}.

Indeed, obey the rules that your mother has commanded.

21Remember what we have taught you as if it were always a part of you.

Indeed, {remember these lessons as if} you wore them like a necklace.

22The wise things that we have taught you will help you to know what you should do as you go about each day.

They will cause you to be safe when you sleep.

When you wake up {in the morning}, they will be what will continue to instruct you.

23{This is so} because what I have commanded {you} is {like} a lamp {that shows you your way}.

Indeed, the rules {we taught you} are {like} a light {to guide you}.

When we rebuke you while instructing you, {we do that} so that you can do what will give you a good life.

24{We taught you these lessons} in order to prevent you from {going to} wicked women,

{and to prevent you} from {believing} the seductive talk of immoral women.

25Do not think lustfully about her beautiful body.

Do not let her seduce you by the {flirtatious} way she looks at you.

26{Do not do so} because, although having sex with a prostitute may only cost you a cheap meal,

{doing so with} an {adulterous} married woman will cause you to die.

27A man cannot hold fire against his chest without burning his clothes!

28No one can walk on burning coals without blistering his feet!

29It is similar with anyone who has sex with another man's wife.

People will certainly punish anyone who does that.

30People do not resent someone who steals if he only steals {food} because he is hungry.

31Nevertheless, if people catch thieves, those thieves must pay back seven times {as much as they stole to those from whom they stole}.

They may have to give everything that they own {in order to repay what they stole}.

32By contrast, a man who acts adulterously with a woman is not thinking.

By doing this, he destroys himself!

33{The woman's husband} will injure him,

people will despise him,

and he will always be ashamed.

34{This is so} because the jealous husband will become furious.

He will act mercilessly when he revenges himself {on the man who acted adulterously with his wife}.

35That jealous husband will not accept any money {to stop being furious},

no matter how much money you offer him.

Chapter 7

1My son, obey what I have told you.

Carefully remember the things that I have commanded you.

2Do what I have commanded {you}, so that you will live {long and well}.

Consider the rules I have taught you to be the most precious things that you possess.

3Constantly remind yourself of the things that I have commanded you.

Memorize them!

4Love what is wise as if it were your sister.

Indeed, love what you should understand as if it were a close relative.

5{Do this} so that you will be able to stay away from adulterous women,

and {stay away} from immoral women who speak {to you} seductively.

6{I was} once {standing} near the window {in my house},

and I looked down {from above the street} through the shutters on the window.

7Then I observed {someone} among the naive people.

I noticed among the youths a young man who does not think wisely.

8He walked down the street near the corner of {the road where} the adulterous woman {dwells}.

Then he walked on the path toward her house.

9(It was the time of day when night begins, {and then} it became dark.)

10Then I saw that an adulterous woman approached the young man.

She was wearing a prostitute's clothing and intended to deceive {the young man}.

11(That woman spoke loudly and acted rebelliously.

She never stayed at home.

12She {often} walked around the streets and public places.

At the corner of any road she waited {for a man whom she could seduce}.)

13When {she saw the young man}, she firmly took hold of him and kissed him.

She shamelessly told {him},

14"Today {I have meat in my house, because} I sacrificed an animal {in the temple} to promise friendship {with Yahweh}.

{In this way} I did what I had vowed to do.

15So I have come out here to meet you.

{I have come out} to look everywhere for you, and now I have found you!

16I have covered my bed with expensive Egyptian fabric.

17I have put pleasant-smelling perfumes on my bed:

myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.

18Come {with me}! Let us satisfy ourselves sexually all night!

Let us enjoy ourselves sexually!

19{Come with me} because my husband is not at home.

He has gone away on a long journey.

20He filled a bag with money and took it with him.

He will not return home until the middle of the month.”

21{Thus} that adulterous woman persuaded the young man by speaking many persuasive things;

by speaking seductively she allured him {into doing what she wanted him to do}.

22He quickly followed her {to her home}.

He {unknowingly} went to die like an ox going to the place where its owner will kill it.

{He unknowingly went to die} like a foolish person who lets others lead him by a chain to where they will punish him

23until {someone kills him by} shooting an arrow into his entrails.

{He was as foolish} as a bird flying quickly into a trap.

He did not realize that going with the adulterous woman would cause him to die.

24So now, children, listen to what I say!

Carefully pay attention to what I have spoken to you!

25Do not desire to be with any adulterous woman.

Indeed, never go with one of them!

26{Do not do so} because they have ruined the lives of many men.

It would be difficult to count all of the men that they have caused to die!

27{Going to} an adulterous woman’s house is like choosing to become a dead person.

Those who enter her bedroom will die as a result.

Chapter 8

1Imagine that there is a woman who represents everything that is wise. Surely such a woman calls out {to everyone}.

Indeed, imagine that this woman represents everything that people should understand.

Surely such a woman shouts {these things to people}.

2Imagine that this woman stands at the highest place next to the crowded crossroads {where everyone can hear her}.

3Imagine that this woman shouts loudly beside the gates at the entrance to a city.

4{Imagine that she proclaims:} “I am calling out to all of you!

I am speaking to all people!

5You naive people must learn to be prudent.

You foolish people must learn how to be discerning.

6Listen {to what I say}, because I will tell you some excellent things.

I will speak to you about what is right.

7{Listen to what I say} because I speak what is true.

I detest speaking what is evil.

8Everything that I say is honest.

I do not say anything that is false or that deceives {people}.

9Everything that I say is plain for people who understand.

{Everything that I say} is right to people who have become knowledgeable.

10Choose {to learn} what I instruct you instead of silver.

Indeed, {choose to learn} what you should know instead of the finest gold.

11{Do this} because being wise is more valuable than having precious jewels.

Being wise is more valuable than anything that you can desire.

12I am what is wise. I am a close relative to what is prudent.

I enable people to know how to decide things intelligently.

13Everyone who reverently fears Yahweh hates what is evil.

I{, what is wise,} hate it when people are proud or arrogant.

I hate it when people act wickedly and when people speak perversely.

14I advise people well and enable them to be truly wise.

I am what people need in order to understand how things truly are.

I strengthen people.

15I enable kings to rule {well}.

{I enable} rulers to make righteous laws.

16I enable princes and nobles to govern {well}.

{I enable} every royal official who judges righteously {to do so}.

17{I am what is wise, and} I benefit anyone who loves me.

Anyone who earnestly tries to become wise will succeed.

18I enable people to become rich and I cause people to honor those people.

{I enable people to have} riches that will last and {I enable people to become} righteous.

19What I can give people is more valuable than even the purest gold and the best silver.

20I {always} do what is righteous and just

21in order to give property to people who love me.

I will fill up the places where they store valuable items.

22Yahweh had me{, what is wise,} when he began to create {everything}.

{Indeed, he had me} before he started doing that.

23Yahweh established me a very long time ago—at the very beginning, before the world existed.

24Yahweh revealed me before the oceans existed

and before there were springs abounding with water.

25Yahweh revealed me before he made the mountains {and} before {he made} the hills.

26{Yahweh revealed me} before he made the land or the fields or the first particles of dirt on the earth.

27I was there when Yahweh made the sky,

{and} when he made the boundary between the sky and the ocean's surface.

28{I was there} when Yahweh made the clouds above {the earth},

{and} when he made the springs flow at the bottom of the ocean.

29{I was there} when Yahweh set boundaries for the seas,

so that the water {in the seas} would not go past the boundaries that he commanded.

{I was there} when Yahweh made the parts supporting the dry land.

30At that time I was {like} someone who was beside Yahweh, skillfully helping him to create {everything}.

I made him happy every day.

I was always rejoicing when I was with him.

31{I was} rejoicing in the whole world that Yahweh had made.

I was also happy with the people {he had made}.

32So now, children, pay attention to what I say!

{Do this} because anyone who obeys my teachings will be happy.

33Listen to what I teach {you}, so that you will become wise.

Think about what I teach you!

34People who listen to me will be happy.

People who are as eager to listen to me as if they were waiting {for me} at the door of my house every day

and watching for me to come out {will be happy}.

35{This is true} because people who learn to be wise will live {well},

and Yahweh will approve of them.

36But those who refuse to be wise hurt themselves.

All those who hate to be wise {act like they are people who} would love to die.”

Chapter 9

1Continue imagining that there is a woman who represents everything that is wise. Imagine that this woman has built her own {spacious} house

and made seven pillars {to support its roof}.

2{Imagine that she has prepared a meal for guests.}

She has prepared the meat {to eat} and wine {to drink}.

She has {fully} prepared her table for a meal.

3Imagine that this woman has sent out her maids {to invite her dinner guests}.

Then she calls out at the highest place in the city {where everyone can hear her}.

4She tells those who are not wise,

“Come into {my house}, all you naive people!

5Come {to me}! Eat the food that I have prepared,

and drink the wine that I have prepared.

6Stop acting naively so that you can live {well}.

Do what will cause you to learn what you should understand.

7If you {try to} teach someone who ridicules {other people}, that person will ridicule you.

If you correct an evil person, that person will hurt you.

8{So} do not correct a person who ridicules {other people}. If you do so, then that person will hate you.

{However,} if you correct a wise person, that person will love you {for doing so}.

9If you instruct wise people, then they will become even wiser.

If you teach righteous people, then they will learn even more.

10If you want to be wise, you must start by revering Yahweh,

and {only} by knowing what is holy will you understand {which teachings are wise and true}.

11Surely being wise will cause you to live for many more years.

12Any wise person benefits himself from being wise,

just as anyone who ridicules {other people} will personally suffer for doing so."

13Foolish women speak loudly,

act naively, and are very ignorant.

14They sit at the doors of the places where they dwell.

{They sit} on seats at the highest place in the city {where everyone can hear them}.

15{They sit there} in order to call out to the people who are walking past them.

{They call out to} those walking down the road, who are only concerned about where they are going.

16They tell those who are not wise,

"Come into {my house}, all you naive people!

17{Come to me, because having sex with someone to whom you are not married is} as sweet as water that you have stolen.

Indeed, {it is} as delicious as food that you eat all by yourself."

18But men who go to the houses of such women are not aware that the men who have gone there before have died.

{They are not aware} that the guests of such women are now in the deepest parts of the place where dead people are.

Chapter 10

1{These are more} wise sayings {said} by Solomon:

Wise children make their fathers glad,

but foolish children make their mothers sad.

2Riches that people acquire by acting wickedly will not benefit them,

but people who act righteously prevent themselves from dying {too soon}.

3Yahweh prevents righteous people from starving,

but he prevents wicked people from getting what they want.

4People who are lazy become poor,

but people who work hard become rich.

5Sons who collect crops at the right time are insightful,

but sons who sleep during the time to harvest crops are shameful.

6God blesses righteous people,

but what wicked people say {sometimes} prevents others from knowing about the violent acts {that they do}.

7People will be happy when they remember righteous people,

but people will forget wicked people as if they were something that decays {and disappears}.

8People who think wisely are willing to obey the {good} things that people tell them to do,

but people who speak foolishly destroy themselves.

9People who behave honestly will live safely;

but God will catch people who behave deceitfully.

10People who gesture with their eyes {to deceive others} hurt {people},

and people who speak foolishly destroy themselves.

11What righteous people say is like a spring that enables people to live long and well;

but what wicked people say prevents others from knowing about the violent acts {that they do}.

12When people hate others, they argue with each other;

but when people love others, they forgive people for the wrong things that they do.

13Discerning people say what is wise,

but someone must punish people who do not think wisely.

14Wise people continue to learn all that they can,

but when foolish people speak, they start to destroy things.

15What rich people own keeps them safe like a strong wall keeps a city safe,

but poor people suffer much because they are poor.

16God rewards righteous people by allowing them to live {for a long time},

but God recompenses wicked people by punishing them for sinning.

17People who heed what is instructive will live for a long time;

but people who do not let others correct them do what will destroy them.

18People who hate {others} but pretend that they do not {hate them} speak falsely.

People who slander others are foolish.

19People who talk a lot sin a lot;

but people who refrain from speaking {unnecessarily} are wise.

20What righteous people say is {as valuable as} the best silver;

{but} what wicked people think is worthless.

21What righteous people say benefits many people,

but foolish people die because they do not think wisely.

22When people become wealthy, {it is because} Yahweh has blessed them,

and working harder will not make them to become wealthier.

23Foolish people enjoy doing the wicked things that they planned {to do},

but sensible people enjoy doing what is wise.

24Wicked people will experience what frightens them;

but righteous people will receive what they want.

25When something disastrous happens, it destroys wicked people,

but righteous people are {like} a foundation that lasts forever.

26Lazy people irritate people who send them {to do something for them},

like vinegar irritates teeth and smoke irritates eyes.

27People who revere Yahweh will live for a long time,

but wicked people will live for only a short time.

28What righteous people hope for will make them joyful,

but what wicked people hope for will not happen.

29Yahweh protects honest people like a fortress because they live the way that he directs people to live,

but not living that way destroys people who act sinfully.

30Righteous people will always be secure,

but wicked people will never live in our land.

31Righteous people say what is wise,

but Yahweh will stop people from speaking who speak perversely.

32Righteous people know good things to say,

but wicked people {continually} say things that are not true.

Chapter 11

1Yahweh detests {people} using weighing instruments in order to deceive others,

but it pleases him when people use correct weights {on their weighing instruments}.

2When people act proudly, they will soon disgrace themselves,

but humble people are wise.

3Upright people know what to do because they are honest,

but being deceitful will ruin treacherous people.

4What people own will not help them when Yahweh punishes {wicked people},

but he will not kill those who live righteously.

5Being righteous will cause innocent people to live securely,

but being wicked will ruin those who act wickedly.

6Being righteous will cause people who act uprightly to escape {harm},

but desiring {bad} things will cause people who act treacherously to trap themselves.

7When wicked people die, what they hoped for never happens;

they hoped that being strong would benefit them, but it will not.

8Yahweh rescues righteous people from becoming distressed;

but wicked people will become distressed instead.

9People who reject God ruin other people by what they say,

but what righteous people know will cause them to escape.

10People in a city rejoice when the righteous people {there} prosper,

and they shout joyously when wicked people die.

11A city becomes great when people who act uprightly bless {the people there},

but what people who act wickedly say destroys that city.

12People who {openly} detest someone they know are not thinking wisely;

but understanding people say nothing.

13People who go around gossiping tell {others} what is secret,

but trustworthy people will keep a matter private.

14Not having anyone to guide a group of people will ruin them,

but having many people to advise them will keep that group secure.

15People who guarantee {to pay a debt} for someone they do not know will surely suffer,

but people who avoid agreeing {to do such a thing} will be safe.

16People honor a gracious woman,

but cruel men {only} get wealth.

17People who are faithfully kind greatly benefit themselves,

but cruel people hurt themselves.

18People who act wickedly falsely believe that they have gained {something good},

but God truly rewards people who do what is right.

19People who truly act righteously will live {well},

but people who eagerly do what is evil will die.

20Yahweh detests people who think deceitfully,

but people who act blamelessly please him.

21It is certain that Yahweh will punish wicked people,

and that he will not punish those who belong to the righteous group.

22{It is as unsuitable for} a beautiful woman to refuse to act discreetly

{as it is for} a pig to have a gold ring in its snout.

23When righteous people get what they want, it results in only good things,

but when wicked people get what they hope for, it results in {Yahweh} being angry.

24Some people generously share {what they have with others} but they receive even more.

Other people keep more {of what they have} than they should keep, but they still become poor.

25People who generously bless others will prosper;

and people who generously give others what the others need will also receive everything that they need.

26People curse anyone who {selfishly} hoards grain {instead of selling it},

but they bless people who sell it {when others need it}.

27If you sincerely want to do what is right, people will treat you well,

but evil things happen to people who try to do what is evil.

28People who depend on their money will not be successful,

but righteous people will thrive like a green plant.

29People who trouble their families will not inherit anything,

and people who act foolishly will serve people who think wisely.

30What righteous people say and do is {like} a tree {with fruit} that keeps people alive,

and people who persuade others {to be righteous} are wise.

31Pay attention! Righteous people on the earth will get what they deserve;

but even more so, wicked, sinful people will {also} get what they deserve!

Chapter 12

1People who love other people correcting them {also} love {learning} what they should know.

But people who hate other people correcting them are foolish.

2Yahweh approves of people who are good,

but he condemns people who plan to do what is evil.

3People do not become secure by acting wickedly,

but righteous people are {as secure as} a tree with immovable roots.

4A virtuous wife causes people to praise her husband,

but a disgraceful wife {destroys her husband} like a disease that destroys his bones.

5Righteous people plan {to treat people} fairly;

wicked people advise {people} in order to deceive {them}.

6What wicked people say {is like a trap that} kills people {who pass by};

but what upright people say will enable them to escape.

7Yahweh destroys wicked people and they disappear,

but the families of righteous people will continue.

8People will praise someone according to how insightful that person is,

but people will despise someone who thinks perversely.

9It is better to be a lowly person yet have a servant

than to think that you are important yet have no food.

10Righteous people care for their animals,

but even when wicked people {think that they} act compassionately, they act cruelly.

11People who work hard will have enough food {to eat},

but people who waste time doing worthless things do not think wisely.

12Wicked people want what evil people steal,

but righteous people benefit {others} like a tree with deep roots.

13The sinful things that wicked people say will destroy them,

but righteous people escape from trouble.

14The {good} things that people say {to others} will {also} satisfy them with what is good;

what people work hard to accomplish will {also} benefit them.

15Foolish people {always} think that what they are doing is right;

but wise people listen to what other people advise {them to do}.

16People know immediately when foolish people are angry;

but smart people ignore it when someone disrespects them.

17People who naturally say what is true speak righteously,

but witnesses who say what is false speak deceitfully.

18When people speak without thinking {about what to say}, they hurt others like someone who stabs people with a sword,

but what wise people say helps people heal.

19What people say truthfully will last forever,

but what people say falsely will {only} last for a moment.

20People who plan to act evilly think deceitfully,

but people who advise others to act peacefully will be joyful.

21Bad things {usually} do not happen to righteous people,

but wicked people will experience many bad things.

22Yahweh detests people who speak falsely,

but people who act faithfully please him.

23Smart people do not reveal {all of} what they know,

but foolish people shout out foolish things.

24People who work hard will reign {over others},

but lazy people will become forced laborers.

25When people worry, they feel sad,

but when others speak kindly to them, it causes them to be cheerful again.

26Righteous people guide their friends {in the right way to live},

but by living wickedly, wicked people destroy themselves.

27Lazy people do not even cook the animals that they catch,

but people who work hard value their possessions.

28People who do what is righteous will live.

Indeed, people who do so will not die.

Chapter 13

1Wise children pay attention when their fathers instruct them,

but people who ridicule {other people} do not pay attention when people correct {them}.

2The {good} things that people say are {like} good food to them,

and the violent things that treacherous people do are {like} food for them.

3People who are careful about what they say enable themselves to stay alive,

{but} people who speak carelessly destroy themselves.

4Lazy people want things very much and get very little,

but people who work hard will receive everything that they want.

5Righteous people detest speaking falsely,

but what wicked people do is disgusting and disgraceful.

6Acting righteously enables people who act blamelessly to be safe,

but acting wickedly causes sinful people to do what will destroy them.

7Some people act as if they are wealthy while they are {actually} poor.

Other people act as if they are poor while they are {actually} wealthy.

8Rich people {might} have to pay money {to someone who threatens them} in order to stay alive,

but poor people do not {even} listen when someone threatens them.

9Righteous people live joyfully like a light {that shines brightly},

but wicked people {will merely die} like an oil lamp that stops burning {oil}.

10People who act proudly cause people to argue,

but people who let others advise them cause people to be wise.

11Riches that people gain effortlessly will disappear,

but people who gain {riches} by working steadily will increase {their riches}.

12People despair when they do not receive what they have been hoping to receive,

but when people receive what they have been wanting to receive, they feel like they have everything that they need.

13People who detest what others {try to} teach them will suffer {for doing so},

but God will reward those people who respect what he has commanded.

14What wise people teach continuously benefits people throughout their lives.

It enables people to avoid dangerous things that could kill them.

15People approve of people who are very insightful,

but treacherous people are stubborn in the way that they live.

16All clever people think carefully before they do something,

but foolish people show that they are foolish {by how they act}.

17Bad things happen to messengers who are not reliable,

but reliable messengers make people peaceful.

18People who do not let other people correct them will become poor and ashamed,

but people respect those who let other people rebuke them {for any bad behavior}.

19People feel pleasant when they get what they want,

but foolish people detest refusing to do what is evil.

20People who associate with wise people will become wise {themselves},

but people who are companions of foolish people will suffer.

21Bad things happen to sinful people,

but good things happen to righteous people.

22Good people will leave riches for their grandchildren {when they die},

but righteous people will receive the riches that sinful people have saved.

23Poor people have fields that can produce a lot of food,

but unjust people take it away {from them}.

24Parents who do not punish their children {for bad behavior act as if they} hate their children,

but parents who {truly} love their children are careful to discipline them.

25Righteous people have enough {food} to eat and satisfy themselves,

but wicked people will be hungry.

Chapter 14

1The wisest women help their families to thrive,

but foolish women ruin their families by {the foolish} things that they do.

2People who behave uprightly {show that they} greatly revere Yahweh,

but people who behave deceptively {show that they} detest Yahweh.

3What foolish people say causes others to punish them for being proud,

but what wise people say protects them.

4If a man has no oxen {to plow his field}, he does not need to put grain in their feedbox,

but if he has oxen, they will enable {him to produce} an abundant crop.

5Honest witnesses do not lie,

but dishonest witnesses lie easily.

6People who ridicule {other people} try to become wise and fail to do so,

but people who understand {what is right} learn things easily.

7If you associate with foolish people,

you will not learn {anything} from knowledgeable people.

8People who have good sense know that it is wise to understand {the consequences of} what they do,

but stupid people deceive {themselves and others}, which is foolish.

9Foolish people scorn people who make amends with Yahweh after sinning,

but Yahweh approves of people who do what is right.

10Only you truly know how miserable you are,

and only you truly know how joyful you are.

11The families of wicked people will die out,

but the families of upright people will thrive.

12There is a way to do things that is easy and convenient for people,

but in the end, doing things that way will cause them to die.

13People who are laughing may still be suffering,

and people who feel joyful may ultimately feel sad.

14People who refuse {to live righteously} will receive {from Yahweh} what they deserve {from living that way};

and good people {will also receive from Yahweh} what they deserve {from living the good way}.

15Naive people believe whatever people say,

but smart people think carefully about what they do.

16Wise people are careful and avoid doing things that annoy {others},

but foolish people confidently interfere {in other people's business}.

17People who quickly become angry act foolishly,

and people hate those who plan to do evil things.

18Naive people only acquire foolish habits,

but the reward for clever people is what they know.

19{Some day} evil people will {respectfully} bow in front of good people,

and wicked people will bow at the doors of {the houses where} righteous people {dwell}.

20Even the friends of poor people despise them,

but rich people have many friends.

21It is sinful to despise your {poor} neighbors,

but God is pleased with those who do kind things for poor people.

22People who plan to act wickedly are surely doing the wrong thing with their lives,

but people who plan to do what is good are faithful and trustworthy people.

23If people work hard, they will gain from it,

but if people {only} talk, they will remain poor.

24A reward of being wise is to become rich,

but because stupid people are foolish, they {only} become more foolish.

25Truthful witnesses save people from dying,

but deceptive people tell lies {that cause harm to people}.

26People who revere Yahweh are completely confident {that he will protect them}.

Yahweh will also protect their children.

27Reverently fearing Yahweh is like having a refreshing spring that enables people to live well.

It enables people to avoid what could kill them.

28Kings who rule over many people are glorious,

but kings who have no people {to rule over} have nothing.

29People who do not become angry quickly are very wise,

but people who become angry quickly show everyone how foolish they are.

30Feeling peaceful makes a person's body healthy,

but envying others {makes a person's body unhealthy, like something that} rots a person's bones.

31People who make poor people suffer ridicule Yahweh, who made them,

but people who are kind to needy people respect Yahweh.

32Wicked people destroy themselves by doing evil things,

but righteous people are safe {even} when they die.

33Understanding people think wisely,

but when one is among foolish people what is wise is {especially} obvious.

34Acting righteously makes a country great,

but acting sinfully disgraces communities.

35Insightful servants please their kings,

but kings are furious with {servants} who act disgracefully.

Chapter 15

1Replying gently to angry people will calm them,

but speaking harshly {to them} will make them angrier.

2What wise people say makes others want to know more,

but foolish people constantly say what is foolish.

3Yahweh sees everything that is happening;

he observes both evil people and good people.

4What people say soothingly is {like} a tree {with fruit} that enables people to live well,

but what people say deceitfully makes people despair.

5Foolish people detest what their fathers say to correct them,

but people who let others rebuke them are clever.

6Righteous people have houses that contain a lot of riches,

but what wicked people gain disrupts them.

7What wise people say informs others of what they should know,

but what foolish people think does not do that.

8Yahweh detests the sacrifices that wicked people offer {to him},

but he delights in the prayers of upright people.

9Yahweh detests what wicked people do,

but he loves people who diligently try to do what is right.

10Yahweh will severely punish people who refuse to live righteously,

{and} people who refuse to let other people correct them will perish.

11Yahweh knows everything about the place where dead people are,

so he surely knows everything that everyone thinks!

12People who ridicule others despise anyone who corrects them;

they avoid wise people.

13People smile when they are happy,

but feeling sad can make people despair.

14Sensible people are always trying to learn more,

but foolish people satisfy themselves with what is foolish.

15People who suffer experience bad things every day,

but cheerful people live as though they are always feasting.

16Being poor while reverently fearing Yahweh

is better than being rich while worrying.

17It is better for someone to have a small meal of vegetables with people who love each other

than to have a large meal of good meat with people who hate each other.

18People who easily become angry cause people to argue,

but people who do not easily become angry will help people to be peaceful.

19Lazy people are {unproductive} like people walking through thorny plants,

but upright people are {productive} {like people} walking on a level road.

20Wise sons and daughters make their parents happy,

but any sons or daughters who detest their parents are foolish.

21People who are not wise enjoy acting foolishly,

but understanding people do what is right.

22People will not accomplish what they plan to do if there is no one to advise them {well},

but when many people advise them {well}, they will succeed.

23People rejoice when they answer someone aptly.

It is so good to say something at the right time!

24Insightful people live in a way that causes their lives to become increasingly better,

in order for them to avoid living in a way that would result in dying.

25Yahweh will destroy what proud people own,

but he protects the {few} things that widows own.

26Yahweh detests the evil things that people think,

but the pleasing things that people say are pure.

27People who gain wealth in an unjust manner trouble their families,

but people who refuse bribes will live {in a better way}.

28Righteous people think carefully about how to reply to people,

but wicked people quickly say what is evil.

29Yahweh does not listen to {what} wicked people {request him to do},

but he listens {and responds} when righteous people pray {to him}.

30People feel happy when they see someone smile,

{and} people feel healthy when they hear something good.

31People who begin to behave in a more life-giving way when others rebuke them {for behaving badly} show that they belong to the group of wise people.

32People who refuse to let others correct them {act as if they} despise themselves,

but people who listen when others rebuke them think wisely.

33Revering Yahweh teaches people to be wise,

and people must be humble before other people can respect them.

Chapter 16

1People plan what they want {to say},

but Yahweh determines how they will {actually} speak.

2People think that everything that they do is right,

but Yahweh knows why people do what they do.

3Entrust what you do to Yahweh,

and he will make what you plan {to do} succeed.

4When Yahweh made everything, he planned what would happen to each thing.

He has even made wicked people for the time when he will punish them.

5Yahweh detests all proud people;

he will certainly punish them.

6Be loyal to Yahweh and faithfully obey him; if you do that, he will forgive you for having sinned.

People who revere Yahweh will avoid doing what is evil.

7When Yahweh approves of what people do,

he even causes their enemies to be peaceful with them.

8It is better {for someone} to have {just} a few things while being righteous,

than {for someone} to have a lot of crops while being unjust.

9People plan what they want to do,

but Yahweh determines what they will {actually} do.

10Kings speak for God;

when kings judge, they must {always} speak justly.

11Yahweh made accurate weighing instruments {for us to use honestly}.

Indeed, he made all the stones in the {weighing} bag {so that we would use them honestly}.

12Kings {should} detest any wicked thing that people do

because acting righteously causes kings to rule securely.

13{Ideally,} kings enjoy hearing people speak honestly.

Indeed, they love people who say what is true.

14When kings are angry, they cause people to die,

so wise people will appease them.

15When kings are happy, they let people live;

when they approve of people, it is as refreshing as rain in springtime.

16Becoming wise is better than having gold.

Indeed, it is better to choose to become understanding than to have silver.

17Upright people act in a way that avoids doing what is evil;

people who want to stay alive are careful about what they do.

18Being proud causes people to destroy themselves.

Indeed, being arrogant causes people to ruin themselves.

19It is better to live humbly among poor people

than to {live proudly and} receive some of what proud people have taken from others.

20People who act prudently in a matter will succeed,

and people who trust in Yahweh are happy.

21People will call those who think wisely, “understanding ones,”

and people who speak pleasantly are able to teach others effectively.

22Being insightful allows a person to live well continually,

but foolish people can only teach others to be foolish.

23What wise people think causes them to speak insightfully,

and what those people say causes others to learn.

24The pleasing things that people say are {like} a honeycomb:

They cause people to feel pleasant and healthy.

25There is a way to do things that is easy and convenient for people,

but in the end, doing things that way will cause them to die.

26Being hungry helps working people work

because wanting to eat motivates people to keep on working.

27Worthless people plot how to hurt others;

the evil things they say harm others like fire burns {people}.

28Perverse people cause other people to argue with each other,

and people who gossip about others cause friends to stop being friends.

29Violent people tempt other people {to sin},

and they guide them to behave wickedly.

30People who use their eyes to signal to others are planning to do something perverse;

people who use their lips to signal to others are about to do the evil thing {that they had planned to do}.

31{The} gray hair {that old people have} is {like} an honorable crown {on their heads};

they achieve it by living righteously.

32It is better to be someone who does not become angry quickly than to be powerful.

It is better to control oneself than to be {as powerful as} someone who conquers a city.

33People throw lots {in order to decide what to do},

but Yahweh decides whatever happens.

Chapter 17

1It is better for someone to have a little stale food {to eat} while living peacefully

than for someone to live in a house where people frequently eat large meals while arguing with each other.

2An insightful slave will become the boss of a disgraceful son {of his master},

and that slave will inherit a portion {of his master's property} along with his master's sons.

3People put silver and gold into very hot furnaces {to burn out what is impure},

and Yahweh tests what people are thinking and desiring to do {in a similar manner}.

4People who act wickedly listen carefully when people speak what is sinful;

people who lie pay attention when people say things that destroy {others}.

5People who ridicule poor people despise Yahweh, who made them;

Yahweh will certainly punish people who rejoice when other people experience disastrous things.

6Old people are proud of their grandchildren,

and children are proud of their parents.

7It is not fitting for worthless people to speak eloquently.

It is even less fitting for royal officials to speak falsely!

8People who pay bribes think that bribes are magical;

{by paying bribes, they think that} everything that they do will be successful.

9If you want people to love you, forgive them for the wrong things that they have done to you.

If you continue to remind them about those {wrong} things, they will no longer be your friends.

10Rebuking sensible people once causes them to learn

more than hitting foolish people a hundred times {causes them to learn}.

11Evil people only want to rebel,

so a merciless messenger will come and punish them.

12A mother bear who is furious because someone has stolen her cubs is dangerous,

but it can be more dangerous to confront a foolish person who is doing something foolish.

13If someone does bad things to people who have done good things to him,

then bad things will always happen to his family.

14When people start arguing with each other, it is {as difficult to stop as it is to stop} water that is leaking out {of a dam},

so prevent yourself from arguing before you start to argue.

15There are people who acquit guilty people,

and there are people who condemn innocent people;

Yahweh detests both types of people.

16How useless it is for foolish people to try to pay money in order to become wise

when they are unable to think!

17A friend loves {you} all the time,

and relatives exist in order to help {other relatives} when disastrous things happen.

18People who do not think wisely agree to pay someone else's loan

and even guarantee to pay that loan in front of people whom they know.

19People who love to sin {also} love to cause people to argue;

people who brag a lot cause others to destroy them.

20People who think deceitfully will not experience good things,

and bad things will happen to people who speak deceitfully.

21Foolish people grieve their parents.

Indeed, worthless people will cause their parents to be very sad.

22Being cheerful helps the body to heal,

but being discouraged makes the body weak.

23Wicked people accept bribes that people give to them secretly,

so that they will decide matters unfairly.

24Understanding people concentrate on what is wise,

but foolish people cannot concentrate on anything.

25Foolish children grieve their fathers

and make their mothers miserable.

26Punishing innocent people is surely very bad,

{and} flogging noble people {would be just as} wrong.

27People who refrain from speaking {unnecessarily} are knowledgeable,

and people who can remain calm are {truly} wise.

28People will think even foolish people are wise if those foolish people do not speak.

Indeed, if fools refrain from speaking people will consider them to be insightful.

Chapter 18

1People who avoid other people only care about doing what they want to do.

They refuse to do anything that is wise.

2Foolish people hate learning.

Instead, they only want to tell others what they think.

3People treat wicked people contemptuously,

and people scold people who act shamefully.

4What {wise} people say is as profound as a deep ocean.

Wise people are {always saying wise things, like} a fountain that flows in a constant stream.

5It is very evil {for judges} to favor guilty people

in order to prevent judging innocent people justly.

6What foolish people say makes people argue,

and it makes people want to beat them.

7What foolish people say will ruin them.

Indeed, what they say may cause them to die, as a trap {may cause an animal to die}.

8People are eager to listen to what people who gossip say,

and what they say deeply affects those who hear it.

9People who are lazy when they work

are like people who destroy things.

10Yahweh is {like} a strong tower

that righteous people run into and are safe.

11Rich people think that what they own keeps them safe like walls keep cities safe;

they think that what they own protects them as well as a high wall.

12Before people ruin themselves, they have first become proud;

and before people will respect someone, that person must become humble.

13It is foolish and shameful

for someone to reply to what a person has said before hearing it.

14When someone is inwardly strong, he can endure being sick.

However, when someone is inwardly weak and depressed, it is very difficult to make the person feel better!

15Understanding people are always learning more.

Indeed, wise people are always trying to learn more.

16Giving something {to someone} can benefit the one who gives it;

doing so can enable that person to meet important people.

17People who state their cases first seem to be right

until people whom they know arrive and question them.

18Throwing lots {in order to decide something} can make people stop arguing,

it can also decide who is right between powerful people.

19It is more difficult to reconcile with a relative {whom you have} offended than {to conquer} a fortified city;

and when people argue, they avoid each other as if a castle's strong gate were between them.

20What people say will satisfy them when they are hungry.

Indeed, what people say will satisfy them.

21What people say can cause people to die or to remain alive.

So people who are skillful at talking will strongly influence what happens to themselves {and to others}.

22A man who marries a {good} wife will experience good things,

and Yahweh approves of them.

23Poor people plead for others to be merciful {to them}, but rich people reply {to them} rudely.

24Having companions {who only seem to be true friends} will destroy a person,

but there is a type of friend who loves us and is more loyal than any brother.

Chapter 19

1It is better to be poor and behave honestly

than to speak deceitfully and be foolish.

2Furthermore, it is very bad for people to be enthusiastic {about doing something} while not knowing {anything about it};

people who act hastily do things wrong.

3People who act foolishly destroy themselves,

yet they become furious with Yahweh {and blame him}.

4Wealthy people {easily} make many friends,

but when people become poor, they lose {even} the friends they have.

5Someone will surely punish lying witnesses.

Indeed, someone will surely punish people who lie easily.

6A lot of people want royal officials to favor them,

and many people want to be friends with people who give gifts.

7All the relatives of poor people despise them,

and even their friends avoid them!

Although they call out {to them for help}, they do not {respond}.

8People who love to learn benefit themselves;

people who are consistently sensible will surely succeed.

9Someone will surely punish lying witnesses.

Indeed, people who lie easily will die.

10It is wrong for foolish people to live luxuriously,

and it is even worse for slaves to reign over princes!

11Insightful people do not get angry quickly,

and people show how honorable they are by forgiving {people who} sin {against them}.

12When kings are furious, they frighten people like the roaring of young lions {frightens people},

but when they approve of people, it is as refreshing {for the people} as dew {is} on plants.

13Foolish children destroy their fathers,

and when wives argue {with their husbands}, it is {as annoying as} constantly dripping water.

14People inherit houses and riches from their fathers,

but Yahweh {alone} gives {men} insightful wives.

15Lazy people sleep well,

but {such} idle people are {always} hungry.

16People who obey {God's} commandments stay alive,

but people who do not care about {God's} ways will die.

17Giving things to poor people is {like} loaning them to Yahweh;

he will reward anyone who does this.

18Discipline your children while {they are young and} you can expect them to learn {to live in the right way}.

{If you} do not {discipline them}, {it is as though you} want them to die.

19Very angry people will pay {for being angry};

so if you rescue them {once from what they must pay}, you will have to do that again and again.

20Pay attention to what people advise you {to do} and let people teach you.

If you do so, you will become wise for the rest of your life.

21People plan to do many things,

but {only} what Yahweh advises will succeed.

22People want others to consider them to be faithful.

It is better to be poor than to be someone who lies.

23Revering Yahweh causes people to live for a long time;

such people rest contentedly at night;

nothing will harm them.

24Some people are so lazy that even though they have put their hands in a dish {of food},

they will not even lift the food to their mouths.

25{If you} punish people who ridicule {others},

{then} naive people {who see you do that} will learn to be sensible.

{If you} correct understanding people,

{then} they will know even more.

26Children who act violently toward their fathers and chase away their mothers

are disgraceful and embarrassing.

27My child, if you want to become stupid,

then stop listening to what people teach you.

28Worthless witnesses scorn what is just,

and wicked people enjoy acting sinfully as if they were gulping down delicious food.

29Yahweh is ready to condemn people who ridicule {others},

and he is ready to beat fools on their backs.

Chapter 20

1Drinking a lot of intoxicating drink causes people to start ridiculing and fighting others;

becoming drunk is very foolish.

2When kings are terrifyingly angry, they frighten people like the roaring of young lions {frightens people};

people who make kings angry cause themselves to die.

3It is honorable to cease arguing with other people,

but all foolish people are eager to argue with others.

4Lazy farmers do not plow {their fields} when they should {plow their fields}.

Then when it is time to harvest {crops}, they look {for crops in their fields}, but there are none.

5Knowing what people are thinking and planning is {as difficult as} drawing water out of a deep {well},

but discerning people are able to do so.

6Many people claim that they are faithful individuals,

but very few people {actually} act faithfully!

7Righteous people live honestly;

their children are very fortunate.

8{Ideally,} kings who sit on their thrones in order to judge {people}

discern anything that is evil and remove it {from their lands}.

9No one can truthfully say, “I do not think sinfully anymore; I do not sin anymore.”

10Yahweh detests {people dishonestly using} both weights that differ and measurements that differ {to benefit themselves}.

11Even young people show others {who they are} by what they do;

how they act shows whether they are innocent and right {or not}.

12Yahweh has made both ears with which to hear and eyes with which to see.

13If you sleep a lot, you will become poor;

{but} if you stay awake {and work}, you will have plenty of food.

14Buyers claim that something is not good at all {when they are bargaining with the seller about its price}.

But {after they buy it,} they go and boast {to their friends about the good thing that they bought}.

15Gold and precious jewels are plentiful,

but the knowledgeable things that people say are rare and precious.

16Take the coats of people who promise to pay a loan for someone whom they do not know.

Indeed, hold onto the coats of people who do so for a foreigner {because those people are not likely to repay those loans}.

17Food that people get by deceiving {others} may taste sweet {to them at first},

but later what they have done will be {as unpleasant to them as having} a mouth full of rocks.

18When people give you good advice, {if you do what they suggest,} your plans will succeed.

Therefore, let others advise you before you start fighting a war.

19People who walk around gossiping tell {others} what is secret,

so avoid people who speak carelessly.

20People who curse their parents

{will die like} an oil lamp that stops burning {oil} in a totally dark place.

21If people inherit {property} hastily before the proper time,

they will ultimately not receive any blessing from it.

22Do not say that you will harm someone who has harmed you.

Rather, wait for Yahweh {to resolve the matter}, so that he may vindicate you.

23Yahweh detests {people dishonestly using} differing weights {to benefit themselves}.

Indeed, {using} weighing instruments in order to deceive {others} is very bad.

24Yahweh directs what happens {even} to powerful people.

So then, no one can comprehend what will happen to him!

25It is dangerous for people to declare thoughtlessly that they will dedicate something to Yahweh,

and then later regret that they have promised to do that.

26Wise kings separate the wicked people from the good people

and then punish the wicked people severely.

27Just as the light of a lamp penetrates into and illuminates a dark place, the life-breath that Yahweh puts into each person penetrates into the person's inner being.

That breath is like the presence of Yahweh, who sees everything that is inside a person.

28Being faithful and trustworthy makes kings safe.

Indeed, being faithful enables them to rule securely.

29People admire young men because they are strong,

but people admire old men because they have become wise.

30Flogging people for doing evil things can stop them from doing those evil things,

and hitting those people {on the outside} can change who they are on the inside.

Chapter 21

1Yahweh directs what kings think as {a farmer directs} streams of water

to make them go wherever he wants {them to go}.

2People always think that what they do is right,

but Yahweh {rightly} evaluates why they do those things.

3Doing what is right and fair is more acceptable to Yahweh
than sacrificing {animals to him}.
4Being proud and arrogant guide what wicked people do like a lamp {shows people where to go};
they are sinful.
5What diligent people plan will certainly profit them,
but all those who act too hastily will certainly become poor.
6When people gain wealth by speaking falsely,
that wealth quickly vanishes like mist, {and doing that} will kill them.
7When wicked people act violently, they cause others to punish them for it
because they refuse to do what is right.
8Guilty people continually do what is wrong,
but innocent people do what is right.
9It is better to live {alone} in a corner of a housetop
than to live inside a house with a wife who always argues {with you}.
10Wicked people strongly desire to do what is evil,
they will not be merciful to the people around them.
11If you punish people who ridicule others, {then} naive people {who see you do that} will become wise,
and if you teach wise people, they will become {even more} knowledgeable.
12Righteous people are able to understand what the households of wicked people do;
they let the evil things that wicked people do happen to them.
13People who refuse to listen to poor people when they cry out {for help}
will also cry out {for help themselves}, but no one will help them.
14Secretly giving something to an angry person will stop him from being angry.
Indeed, secretly bribing a furious person will calm him down.
15Righteous people are glad when people judge justly,
but judging justly terrifies people who act sinfully.
16People who stop behaving sensibly
will {soon} go to the place where the spirits of dead people are.
17People who love what is pleasurable will be poor.
Indeed, people who indulge themselves in wine and rich food will never be wealthy.
18Wicked people will suffer instead of righteous people,

and treacherous people {will suffer} in place of upright people.

19It is better to live {alone} in a desolate land

than {to live} with an argumentative and nagging wife.

20Wise people store up precious riches and olive oil,

but foolish people waste everything that they have.

21People who diligently try to be righteous and faithful

will live {well}, will be righteous, and people will respect them.

22Wise people know how to conquer cities that mighty warriors are defending;

they can pull down the walls that people {in those cities} believe will protect them.

23People who are careful about what they say

avoid becoming distressed.

24People who ridicule others are proud and arrogant;

they behave furiously and presumptuously.

25Lazy people want {food}, but they will die

because they refuse to work.

26Lazy people always want more things for themselves,

but righteous people generously give {what they have to others}.

27{Yahweh} detests the sacrifices that wicked people offer {to him};

it is even more {detestable} when they are offering something {to Yahweh} while intending to act wickedly!

28Witnesses who lie will die,

but when someone who listens carefully speaks, what he says will finish the matter.

29Wicked people pretend to know what they are doing,

but upright people think about what they do.

30Even the wisest and most knowledgeable counselor is nothing compared to Yahweh.

31Soldiers prepare to fight,

but Yahweh determines who wins {that fight}.

Chapter 22

1Being someone whom people respect is more important than being very wealthy.

Indeed, being someone whom others approve of is better than having silver and gold.

2Rich people and poor people have this in common:

Yahweh made all of them.

3Sensible people observe something dangerous happening and avoid it,

but naive people just keep going and suffer {for doing so}.

4People who are humble, who revere Yahweh,

will become rich, people will respect them, and they will live {long and well}.

5Deceptive people live {dangerously,} as if they were walking down a road covered with thorns and traps,

{but} people who want to stay alive avoid living that way.

6Teach children how to behave {properly},

so that when they become old, they will still continue to do so.

7Rich people reign over poor people,

and people who borrow {money} from others become like slaves to the people who loaned them {money}.

8People who act unjustly will suffer for doing so,

and they will no longer be able to furiously oppress other people.

9Yahweh will bless generous people

because they give some of their own food to poor people.

10If you banish people who ridicule others, then people will stop arguing {with each other},

condemning {each other}, and shaming {each other}.

11People who love being sincere and

speaking graciously are companions of kings.

12Yahweh preserves true sayings,

but he makes what treacherous people say fail.

13Lazy people {as an excuse to not work} claim that there is a lion outside that will kill them in the street {if they go outside}.

14What adulterous women say is {as dangerous as} a deep hole {that men could fall into};

those with whom Yahweh is angry will suffer from it.

15Children naturally think foolishly,

but physically disciplining them will teach them to stop being foolish.

16People who oppress poor people in order to make more money for themselves

or who give things to rich people {in order to become rich} will only become poor.

17Listen carefully to what wise people have said;

consider carefully what I am teaching you!

18{Do this} because if you remember these sayings

and if you are always ready to repeat them {to others},

then you will be glad.

19I am teaching these sayings to you—yes, you—right now

so that you will trust Yahweh.

20I am indeed writing these 30 sayings

to advise and teach you.

21{I am writing them} in order to teach you what is true in trustworthy sayings,

and in order to answer those who sent you with trustworthy sayings.

22Do not steal from poor people just because they are poor;

and do not oppress suffering people in court.

23{Do not do these things} because Yahweh will defend those poor people when you dispute with them,

and he will kill the people who stole from them.

24Do not become friends with angry people.

Indeed, do not associate with people who easily become angry.

25{If you do so,} then you will act like them,

and you will endanger yourself like an animal caught in a trap.

26Stay away from those people who agree to pay loans for others.

{Indeed, stay away from those people} who guarantee to pay the loans of others.

27{Because} if you cannot pay back {the loan},

{then} the person to whom you owe money will surely take away even your own bed {in order to pay back the loan}.

28Do not cheat people by moving the stones that their ancestors placed long ago

to mark the boundaries of their land.

29Consider this: People who work skillfully will serve kings

rather than serving unknown people.

Chapter 23

1When you sit down to eat {a meal} with someone who rules over others,

pay attention to the food that is in front of you.

2Restrain yourself {from eating too much}
if you like eating a lot of food.
3Do not crave the {expensive} food that the ruler has
because that ruler is using that food to deceive you.
4Do not work so much that you exhaust yourself in order to become rich.
Be understanding enough to stop doing so.
5As soon as you look at that wealth, it will surely be gone!
{This is} because wealth certainly disappears quickly as if it had wings
and flew off into the sky like a fast bird.
6Do not eat food that stingy people {give you}.
Do not crave the expensive food that they have,
7because stingy people are always thinking about how much the food costs them.
They will tell you to eat and drink,
but they do not mean what they say.
8{When you realize this,} you will want to vomit what little food you ate.
You will have wasted the kind things you said {to them}.
9Do not {try to} talk to foolish people
because they will {only} despise the insightful things that you say.
10Do not cheat people by moving the old stones that mark the boundaries of their land.
Do not claim the land that belongs to {defenseless} orphans,
11because {Yahweh is} the one who redeems them {and he} is powerful.
He is the one who will defend them when they dispute with you.
12Consider carefully {what people say} when they correct you.
Indeed, listen carefully to what people teach you.
13Do not refuse to discipline your children.
If you physically punish them, they will not die.
14In fact, if you physically punish your children,
you will prevent them from dying.
15My child, if you are wise,
then surely I myself will be very happy,
16and I will be deeply joyful

when you say what is right.

17Do not envy sinful people;

instead always revere Yahweh.

18{If you do so, then} you will surely have a {good} future,

and what you hope will happen will indeed occur!

19My child, listen {to me} so that you can become wise.

Make yourself think about behaving rightly.

20Stay away from drunkards and gluttons,

21because drunkards and gluttons will become poor.

They sleep so much that they will only have rags to wear.

22Pay attention to your father, who enabled you to exist,

and continue to honor your mother when she becomes old.

23Learn what is true and remember it.

Learn what is wise and instructive and what you should understand.

24Fathers of righteous people are very joyful.

Indeed, those who father wise people are happy because of them.

25So do what will make your parents happy!

Do what will make your mother joyful!

26My son, pay close attention to me!

Carefully observe what I do!

27{Do this} because prostitutes are as dangerous as a deep hole.

Indeed, {becoming involved with} an adulterous woman is as dangerous as {falling into} a well that you cannot escape from.

28These very women certainly wait {for men to seduce} like robbers {wait for people to rob}.

They cause many men to become unfaithful.

29These are the kind of people who are woeful, sorrowful, and quarrelsome,

who lament, get hurt for no reason,

and have red eyes:

30those people who drink too much wine

and are always looking around for wine {to drink} that someone has prepared.

31Do not let wine become overly attractive to you, even though it is beautifully red, glistens in the cup,

and goes down your throat smoothly.

32Afterward you will feel as terrible as if a poisonous snake has bitten you.

33{When you are drunk,} you will hallucinate,

and you will imagine distorted things.

34You will feel {dizzy and sick} as if you were trying to sleep on a ship that the sea was tossing back and forth.

Indeed, you will feel as if you were trying to sleep while swaying at the top of a ship's sails.

35{You will say,} "People hit me, but it did not hurt.

People beat me, but I did not feel it.

I wish I could be sober

so that I could find even more wine {to drink} again!"

Chapter 24

1Do not envy evil people;

do not want to associate with them,

2because they plan to act violently,

and they talk about doing bad things to people.

3People build households by acting wisely;

they make those households stable by acting sensibly.

4By acting knowledgeably, people fill the rooms {of those households}

with all kinds of valuable and delightful riches.

5Wise people are strong,

and knowledgeable people make themselves more powerful,

6because letting people advise you will make you fight your war successfully,

and letting many people counsel you will rescue you {from losing the war}.

7Foolish people cannot understand what is wise;

they have nothing {useful} to say in court.

8{Some} people are always planning to do evil things;

people refer to them as schemers.

9Foolish plans are sinful,

and people detest those who ridicule others.

10If you give up during distressful times,

then you are weak.

11Save people whom others are trying to kill;

save the ones who will certainly die unless you do something!

12If you {falsely} claim that you did not know that those people were dying unjustly, then think about this:

Yahweh knows exactly what you are thinking and he understands {what you are doing}!

He is the one who keeps you alive and he knows {everything about you}!

He will surely make people receive what they deserve for whatever they have done or not done!

13My child, eat honey because it tastes good,

and honey dripping from the comb tastes sweet.

14Be aware that what is wise is like honey for you.

If you become wise, then you will have a {good} future,

and what you hope will happen will indeed occur!

15Do not be like wicked people and hide in wait in order to attack the places where righteous people dwell.

Do not devastate the places where righteous people rest!

16{Do not do so} because righteous people can recover many times when disastrous things happen to them,

but disastrous things will destroy wicked people.

17Do not be happy when something disastrous happens to your adversaries.

Indeed, do not rejoice when that happens!

18If you do, then Yahweh will notice and disapprove,

so that he stops being angry with your enemies.

19Do not worry about people who do what is evil.

Do not be envious of wicked people.

20{Do not do so} because evil people will not have {good} futures,

{but} wicked people {will merely die} like an oil lamp that stops burning {oil}.

21My child, reverently fear Yahweh and kings.

Avoid people who rebel {against either Yahweh or the king},

22because disastrous things will happen quickly to those people,

and no one knows how terribly both Yahweh and kings can destroy {others}! **23**Here are more things that wise people have said:

It is very evil to favor someone when you judge.

24If anyone declares that a guilty person is innocent,

many people will curse him and whole people groups will hate him.

25However, people who condemn {guilty people} will prosper,

and Yahweh will bless them well.

26People who answer honestly show that they are true friends.

27Do the work you must do outside and prepare your fields

before you build your house.

28Do not testify against someone if you do not have a good reason {to do so},

and do not try to deceive people by what you say.

29Do not say, "I will do to him that same {bad} thing that he did to me;

I will pay him back for what he did to me!"

30I walked by the land of a lazy person

and past the vineyard of someone who does not think wisely.

31And I saw that thistles and weeds were everywhere in that field and vineyard. Even the stone wall surrounding them had fallen down.

32When I saw {that}, I considered carefully {what I was seeing}. When I observed {that}, I learned {this}:

33{If you say to yourself,} "Let me sleep just a little more!

Let me lay my hands {across my chest} in order to rest comfortably for a little while longer!"

34Then {the result of being so lazy will be that} you will become poor and needy

just as surely as if a thief has robbed you.

Chapter 25

1Here are more wise sayings said by Solomon that the scribes who served Hezekiah, the king of Judah, copied {from a scroll that Solomon had written}:

2God shows how glorious he is when he makes something that is difficult for people to understand.

But kings show how glorious they are when they explain something {that is difficult for people to understand}.

3As people cannot fully understand how high the sky is or how deep the earth is,

so they cannot fully understand what kings think.

4People who make things from metal must remove impurities from silver

before they can make {that silver into} something useful.

5{In the same way,} people must remove wicked advisers from the presence of kings

so that they can rule securely by being righteous.

6Do not promote yourself in front of kings,

and do not pretend to be great.

7{Do not do so} because it is better if someone invites you to sit in a place that is closer {to the king},

than for someone to embarrass you in front of a royal official whom you have seen {by telling you to sit farther away from the king}.

8Do not plead your case too quickly against someone you know.

If you do, then you will not know what to do when that person {wins the case and} embarrasses you!

9If you do indeed plead your case against someone you know,

{settle it between yourselves and} do not tell {others} any secret about that person.

10If you do {tell a secret}, then the people who hear you may shame you {for it},

and people will speak badly about you from then on.

11When someone says something that is very appropriate to a situation,

it is {as delightful as seeing} golden apples in a setting of silver.

12When a wise person rebukes someone who is willing to listen,

it is {as valuable as} a gold ring or jewelry made from the best gold.

13Reliable messengers are {as refreshing} to those who send them as cold snow would be {refreshing} during the {summer} harvest time;

they refresh the people whom they serve.

14People who brag about giving something but then do not give it

are as disappointing as clouds and wind that do not bring rain.

15People can persuade leaders by being patient,

and by speaking gently people can convince those who oppose them {to agree with them}.

16If you discover some wild honey, do not eat too much of it.

If you do, then you will become sick from it and vomit.

17{In the same way,} do not visit too often the houses of your friends.

If you do, then they may feel that they have had too much of you and {even} hate you.

18People who lie when they testify against other people

are {deadly, as if they had attacked them with} a club, a sword, or a piercing arrow.

19Trusting treacherous people during distressful times

is {like trying to eat with} a rotten tooth or {trying to walk with} a crippled foot.

20Singing songs to someone who is sad

is {as unhelpful as} taking a coat off of someone in cold weather

or pouring vinegar on soda.

21Feed your enemies if they are hungry;

give them something to drink if they are thirsty.

22{Do so} because by doing so you {will shame them, as if you} were pouring burning coals on top of them,

and Yahweh will reward you {for doing so}.

23When wind blows from the north, that produces rain.

{Similarly,} when people tell the secrets {of others}, {that produces} angry people.

24It is better to live {alone} in a corner of a housetop

than to live inside a house with a wife who always argues {with you}.

25When people hear something good from a faraway place,

it is as {refreshing as drinking} cold water when one is thirsty.

26When righteous people yield to wicked people,

it is {as bad as} a spring that people have made murky by walking in it or {as bad as} a polluted fountain.

27{As} it is not good to eat too much honey;

{so it is not} honorable to try to make people honor you.

28People who cannot control themselves

are {as defenseless as} a city that an army has broken into and knocked down its walls.

Chapter 26

1Honoring foolish people is just as inappropriate

as snow {falling} in {hot} summer and rain {falling} during the time to harvest crops.

2Just as a bird will fly by {and not land on you},

so a curse will not harm you if you are innocent.

3As people must whip horses and bridle donkeys {in order to guide them},

so people must physically punish foolish people {in order to guide them}.

4Do not reply to foolish people according to their foolish way of thinking.

If you do, then you also will be foolish.

5Reply to foolish people according to their foolish way of thinking.

If you do not, then they may think that they are wise.

6Anyone who asks a foolish person to take a message to someone

is {doing something as foolish as} cutting off his own feet or drinking poison.

7{As} the legs of people who cannot walk are useless,

so are the sayings that foolish people say.

8Honoring foolish people is just {as useless}

as a harmless weapon.

9A drunken person picks up a thorn {and it will hurt someone},

{in the same way} a foolish person says a proverb {that can only be harmful}.

10People who employ foolish people or random strangers are {as dangerous}

as someone who randomly shoots arrows at people.

11Foolish people who do the same foolish thing over and over again

are like dogs that eat what they have vomited up.

12Consider this: Foolish people are more likely to learn

than people who {wrongly} think that they are {already} wise.

13Lazy people claim that there is a lion in the path

or in the midst of the streets {so that they can stay inside their houses and do nothing}.

14As doors swing on their hinges {and do not go anywhere},

so lazy people turn back and forth in their beds.

15Lazy people put their hands in a dish {of food},

{but} they are so lazy that they will not lift the food to their mouths.

16A {typical} lazy person {wrongly} thinks that he is wiser

than several people who answer intelligently.

17People who make themselves angry because of an argument that does not concern them

are {as foolish as} people who grab the ears of a dog that is passing by.

18-19 People who trick others

and then say that they were just joking are {as dangerous}

as a crazy person who shoots deadly flaming arrows {at people}.

20Fires stop burning when they have nothing {to burn}.

In the same way, people stop arguing when no one is gossiping.

21{As} charcoal keeps coals burning and wood keeps fires burning,

so people who always argue keep other people arguing.

22People are eager to listen to what people who gossip say,

and what they say deeply affects those who hear it.

23People who fervently say {that they are your friend} while thinking about doing evil things {to you}

{are as deceptive as} a {cheap} clay pot that someone has made to look like silver.

24People who hate you will use what they say to hide what they feel,

but they are {really} thinking about how to betray you.

25Do not believe those people when they speak kindly to you,

because they are thinking many detestable things.

26Although those people deceive others by pretending that they do not hate you,

When people gather together, they will discover how wicked those people are.

27People who dig pits to trap others will fall into those pits instead;

and people who try to crush others with stones will become crushed by those stones instead.

28Liars hate the people whom they hurt,

and flatterers cause disastrous things to happen.

Chapter 27

1Do not brag about {what you will do} tomorrow,

because you do not know what will happen then.

2Do not praise yourself; let someone else praise you.

Indeed, let other people praise you, not yourself.

3Stones and sand are heavy,

but fools are so annoying that they are harder to bear than either of those.

4Angry people are cruel and furious people are destructive,

but no one can withstand jealous people!

5It is better to correct people openly, than to love them without showing them that you love them.

6Friends will be faithful to you by criticizing you {when necessary},

but enemies will deceive you by acting affectionately toward you.

7When people have full stomachs, they do not want to eat {even} honey.

But when people are hungry, {even} bitter things taste sweet to them.

8People who stray from their homes

are like birds that stray from their nests.

9Fragrant oil and perfume make people feel happy,

but having a friend who advises you sincerely is even better.

10Do not ignore your friends or your father’s friends.

Do not {think that you must} go to the house of a relative when something disastrous happens to you.

{Rather,} it is better to go to a nearby neighbor than to relatives who live far away.

11My child, make me happy by becoming wise.

Then I will be able to reply to anyone who argues against me.

12Sensible people observe something dangerous happening and avoid it,

but naive people {ignorantly} do not avoid it and suffer {for doing so}.

13Take the coats of people who promise to pay a loan for someone whom they do not know.

Indeed, hold onto the coats of people who do so for a foreigner.

14If you rise early in the morning and loudly call out a blessing to your neighbor {while he is still sleeping}, he will consider it to be a curse{, not a blessing}.

15A wife who always argues {with you} is as {annoying as}

constantly dripping water on a rainy day.

16It is as difficult to stop her {from arguing} as stopping the wind,

or catching oil in one hand.

17{We can use} one iron tool to sharpen another iron tool; {similarly,} when one person shares what he is thinking, it can help another person to think more clearly.

18Just as people who take care of fruit trees will also eat the fruit from those trees,

so too will masters honor their servants who guard them.

19When people look in water, the water reflects their faces.

In the same way, what people think reveals what kinds of people they are.

20Just as the place where dead people go never becomes full;

so people never stop wanting {things}.

21People use crucibles and furnaces to test and refine silver and gold.

In the same way, people can know what kind of person someone is {by how he reacts} when people praise him.

22If you were to crush a fool the way that you would crush grain {into powder},

you would still not be able to find any part of him that is not foolish.

23Be fully aware of how your sheep are doing.

Indeed, consider carefully how your animals fare.

24{Do so} because riches will not last forever.

Even a king’s family will not rule forever!

25Harvest the grass and then you will see new grass.

Collect {and store} the plants that grow on the hillside.

26{If you do these things, then} you will have lambs with wool that you can clothe yourself with. You will also have male goats that you can sell for enough money to buy a field.

27You will even have female goats that produce enough milk for yourself, your family,

and your servant girls to drink.

Chapter 28

1Wicked people run away even though no one is chasing them,

but righteous people are as brave as lions.

2When the people in a country sin, they will continually have {new} leaders;

but when they have a truly knowledgeable ruler, then they will have a {stable} government that will last.

3A poor person who oppresses other poor people

is {as destructive as} rain that washes away {the crops}, leaving nothing to eat.

4People who reject {Yahweh's} laws say good things about wicked people;

but people who obey those laws oppose such wicked people.

5Evil people cannot comprehend what is just,

but people who desire to please Yahweh comprehend everything {about it}.

6It is better to be poor and honest

than to be dishonest and rich.

7Young people who obey {Yahweh's} laws are wise,

but young people who carouse with gluttons disgrace their fathers.

8Money that people gain by charging an unreasonably large amount of interest {from those to whom they loan money}

will {eventually} belong to someone who is kind to poor people.

9Yahweh detests hearing prayers from people

who refuse to obey his laws.

10People who guide upright people to act evilly

will destroy themselves by what they do,

but people whom Yahweh does not blame {for acting wickedly} will receive what is good.

11Rich people tend to think that they are wise,

but perceptive poor people can tell whether or not this is true.

12People celebrate when righteous people become powerful,

but people hide when wicked people become powerful.

13People who {try to} hide the sinful things that they do will never be successful,
but Yahweh will be merciful to people who confess the sinful things that they have done and stop doing them.
14People who constantly examine how they are thinking and behaving are happy,
but bad things will happen to people who become uncaring about those things.
15Wicked people who rule over poor people are {as dangerous as}
a roaring lion or attacking bear.
16Leaders who are not sensible severely oppress {other people},
{but} people who despise gaining wealth unjustly will live for a long time.
17People who murder others will keep running away {from those who would punish them} until they die.
Do not help them!
18Yahweh will rescue people who continually do what is right,
but people who behave dishonestly will ruin themselves in the end.
19People who work hard will have enough food {to eat},
but people who waste time doing worthless things will only be poor.
20Yahweh abundantly blesses faithful people,
but he will certainly punish people who are eager to be wealthy.
21Although it is very evil to unfairly favor one person over another,
some people will sin {by doing so} to get even a small bribe.
22People who are eager to become rich are greedy.
They do not realize that they will become poor.
23Afterward, people appreciate someone who has corrected them
more than {they appreciate} someone who has spoken flatteringly {to them}.
24People who rob their parents and say that doing so is not wrong
are as bad as thieves.
25Greedy people cause people to argue with each other,
but Yahweh will prosper people who trust him.
26People who trust in themselves are foolish,
but people who act wisely are the ones who will escape {what is dangerous}.
27People who give poor people {what they need} will have all that they need,
but there are many who will curse people who ignore poor people.
28People hide when wicked people become powerful,

but when those wicked people die, there will be more and more righteous people.

Chapter 29

1Some people remain stubborn even though other people often correct them;

but someday something will destroy them quickly, and they will not be able to recover.

2People are joyful when righteous people become influential,

but people are miserable when wicked people rule {over them}.

3People who cherish what is wise make their fathers happy,

but people who have sex with prostitutes waste all their money.

4Kings make the people in their land succeed by acting justly,

but leaders who take money dishonestly ruin the people in their land.

5People who flatter others

are really just preparing to exploit them in some way

6Evil people endanger themselves by acting sinfully,

but righteous people sing joyfully and are happy.

7Righteous people know that they should treat poor people justly,

but wicked people do not {even} understand that they should know {this}.

8People who mock others agitate people throughout a city,

but wise people enable others to remain calm.

9If wise people dispute with foolish people,

the foolish people will become angry and sneer and not resolve anything.

10Murderers despise people who always try to do what is right,

but righteous people try to protect them.

11Foolish people uncontrollably express everything that they feel,

but wise people control how they express what they feel.

12Leaders who believe the false things that people tell them

have only wicked servants.

13Poor people and the people who oppress {them} have {at least} one thing in common:

Yahweh is the one who causes both of them to live.

14Kings who judge poor people according to what is true

will always rule securely.

15If parents punish and correct their children, doing so can make those children wise;

but if parents let their children do whatever they want to do, then their children will disgrace them.

16People sin more when wicked people rule over them,

but {someday} Yahweh will destroy those wicked people, and righteous people will see it happen.

17If you discipline your children, then you will no longer feel worried {about their behavior}

and they will make you very happy.

18When the people {of a nation} do not have messages from Yahweh {through his prophets}, then they do not control themselves,

but people who obey {Yahweh's} laws are happy.

19You cannot correct servants by {only} speaking to them

because they will not do what you say even though they understand {what you say}.

20Consider this: Foolish people are more likely to do well in life

than people who speak thoughtlessly.

21If you give your servants everything they want when they are young,

then they will eventually be arrogant.

22People who easily become angry cause people to argue.

Indeed, angry people cause many people to sin.

23People will humiliate proud people for being proud,

but people will honor those who are humble.

24People who take a share of a thief's spoils greatly endanger themselves;

They hear that Yahweh will curse them {for not testifying to what they know}, but they do not say anything {about the crime}.

25Being anxious is {as dangerous as walking into} a trap,

but Yahweh will protect people who trust in him.

26Many {people} want leaders to help them,

but Yahweh is the {only} one who {surely} does for them what is just.

27Righteous people detest unjust people,

and wicked people detest people who do the right thing.

Chapter 30

1{These are} the sayings of Agur son of Jakeh, which Yahweh told him to say;

{these are what} Agur declared to both Ithiel and Ucal:

2I am certainly less intelligent than other people.

Indeed, I do not understand as much as everyone else understands!

3I have not learned how to become wise,

nor do I know {much} about {Yahweh,} the Holy One.

4{But I will say this:} Surely nobody has ever gone to heaven and returned to earth!

Surely nobody has ever controlled the wind!

Surely nobody has ever gathered the water for rain in the clouds!

Surely nobody has ever formed the boundaries of the earth!

You do not know the name of any such person, or the name of his son.

Therefore, you {also} do not know {much}!

5Everything that God says is true;

he is {like} a shield that protects people who trust him to protect them.

6Never claim that God has said something other than what he has {actually} said.

If you do that, then he will correct you and he will prove that you lied {about what he said}.

7{God,} I ask you to do two things;

please do them for me before I die:

8{Please} prevent me from being dishonest or speaking what is not true.

{Please} do not let me become too poor or too rich,

{but} just provide the proper amount of food for me.

9because if I become rich, I might say that I do not know you and that I do not need you;

and if I become poor,

I might dishonor you by stealing things.

10Never say bad things about servants to the people whom they serve.

If you do, then they will curse you, and people will hold you responsible {for what you said}.

11Some people disrespect their parents.

12Some people think that they are sinless,

but they have committed disgusting sins, {like} people who have covered themselves with excrement.

13Some people are very proud!

They think that they are better than other people. **14**Some people are very cruel toward others;

they harshly oppress and destroy poor people

as fierce animals attack and eat other animals.

15{Greedy people are like} the offspring of leeches
{because they} always want other people to give them more.
There are three, even four things that always want more:
16the place where dead people are,
childless women,
soil that never receives enough water,
and fire that keeps consuming more.
17People who ridicule their fathers,
and refuse to obey their mothers
deserve to {die
and} have wild animals eat their {dead} bodies.
18There are three, even four things, that are too amazing for me to comprehend:
19how a bird flies in the air,
how a snake slithers over a rock,
how a ship sails in the middle of the ocean,
and how a young man loves a young woman.
20Acting adulterously is {as easy} for adulterous women as
eating and wiping their mouths.
Afterward, they claim that they have not sinned at all.
21There are three, even four, things that {the people in} the world cannot tolerate:
22what slaves do who become rulers,
what worthless people do when they have plenty of food to eat,
23what women whom people hate do when they marry someone,
and what servant girls do who replace the wives of their masters.
24There are four creatures in the world that are small
but extremely wise:
25Although ants are not strong,
they store up their food during the summer {so that they have it to eat during the winter}.
26Although hyraxes are {also} not strong,
they are able to make their homes {high up in the rocks} on cliffs.
27Although locusts do not have a king,

they move in orderly groups like soldiers in an army.

28Although anyone can {easily} catch lizards in his hands,

they can freely enter into kings' palaces.

29There are three, even four, things that look very impressive when they walk:

30lions, which are the most powerful animals

and never flee from anything,

31strutting male birds, male goats,

and kings whom people are afraid to rebel against.

32If you have acted foolishly by bragging about yourself,

or if you were plotting {to do what is evil},

then stop doing so immediately!

33{Stop doing so} because just as churning milk produces butter,

and squeezing a nose produces blood,

making people angry causes them to fight.

Chapter 31

1{These are} the sayings of King Lemuel; Yahweh had spoken these sayings that his mother had taught him:

2My son, whom I gave birth to

and whom I vowed {to dedicate to Yahweh}, listen to me!

3Do not exhaust yourself by having sex with women;

they can destroy kings.

4Lemuel, kings and dignitaries should not {constantly} drink wine,

or {greatly} desire to drink what can intoxicate {them}."

5{They must not do this} so that they do not forget the laws {that they have made}

and prevent all suffering people from getting what they legally deserve.

6Let dying people drink what can intoxicate {them},

and let miserable people drink wine.

7They can drink {what can intoxicate them} to forget that they are poor

and to completely forget what troubles them.

8Defend those who cannot speak {for themselves};

{defend} all those whom others are threatening to kill so that they get what they legally deserve.

9Defend, judge rightly,

and plead for suffering and poor people to get what they legally deserve.

10Virtuous and capable women are difficult to find!

This kind of woman is more valuable than precious jewels.

11Her husband completely trusts her,

and he will always gain many things {because of her}.

12Such a woman benefits her husband

for as long as she lives.

13She gets materials to make clothing for both warm and cool weather,

and she enjoys making that clothing.

14She is like merchant ships

because she brings food to her home from distant places.

15She gets up before dawn in order to prepare food for her family

and to prepare some {food} for her female servants.

16She carefully evaluates a field and then buys it.

{Then} she uses some of what she earned by working to plant a vineyard {in it}.

17She keeps her body strong,

and she makes her arms strong {by working hard}.

18She knows that what she does is very profitable.

She works late into the night.

19She makes thread {for clothing} with her own hands.

20She generously helps people who are poor and suffering.

21She is not worried that her family will be cold during cold weather

because her whole family has the best clothing.

22She makes her own blankets to cover beds.

She wears clothing made from expensive cloth.

23People respect such a woman’s husband at the {city} gates,

when he sits {there} with the {other} leaders of the city.

24This woman makes clothing and sells it.

She also sells belts to merchants.

25People notice how strong and dignified she is,

and she is cheerful about what will happen in the future.

26She speaks wisely,

and when she speaks, she teaches {others} to be faithful and kind.

27She carefully watches what happens in her household,

and she is never lazy.

28This woman's children stand respectfully and declare that she lives well.

Her husband says good things about her, as well.

29He says to her, "Many women have acted virtuously and capably,

but you indeed have done better than them all!"

30Charming women {who are not good} can deceive people into thinking that they are good,

and beautiful women will be beautiful for only a short time.

However, people will {always} praise those women who reverently fear Yahweh.

31Give to such women what they have earned,

and praise them publicly for what they have done.

Song of Songs

Chapter 1

1This is King Solomon’s most beautiful song.

The woman thinks about the man she loves

2I wish he would kiss me on my lips,

The woman speaks internally to the absent man

because how you love me is more delightful than wine.

3The fragrance of the perfume on your skin is very pleasing.

More and more people are honoring you,

just as the fragrance of the perfume that you have put on your skin is spreading farther and farther.

That is why the other young women are attracted to you.

4Take me quickly;

take me to your home.

The woman speaking to herself

He is like a king to me;

I desire him to bring me into his bedroom.

The women of Jerusalem speaking about the man

We are very happy about you;

we say that how you love is better than wine.

The woman speaking to the man about the young women of Jerusalem

It is not surprising that the young women adore you.

The woman speaking to the women of Jerusalem

5You young women of Jerusalem,

I am brown but beautiful;

my dark skin is like the tents in Kedar,

and I am beautiful like the curtains in Solomon’s palace.

6But do not stare at me because the sun has made my skin dark;

my brothers were angry with me,

so they forced me to work outside in the sunshine in the vineyards,

so I was not able to take good care of my skin.

The woman speaking to the man she loves

7You whom I love, where will you take your flock of sheep today?

Where will you allow them to rest at noontime?

I want to know because it is not right for me to wander around like a prostitute,

looking for you among the flocks that belong to your friends.

The man answering the woman he loves

8You who are the most beautiful of all the women,

if you search for me and do not know where I will take my sheep,

follow the tracks of the sheep.

Then allow your young goats to eat grass near the shepherds' tents.

9You excite me, my dear one,

like a mare walking among Pharoah's stallions.

10Your cheeks are lovely with jewelry,

and your neck is lovely with strings of beads around it.

11We will make for you some gold earrings

that are inlaid with silver.

The woman speaking to herself

12During the time that he who is like a king to me reclined on his couch,

the fragrance of my perfume spread around the room.

13During the night I desire to cradle the man I love between my breasts; to me, he is like the bag of sweet-smelling perfume which I keep there."

14The man whom I love is like a bunch of the fragrant flowers that are in the grape farms of the city of En Gedi.

The man speaking to the woman he loves

15My dear one, you are beautiful;

you are very beautiful!

Your eyes are as gentle and beautiful as doves.

The woman speaking to the man she loves

16You whom I love, you are very good-looking,

you are delightful!

The green grass will be like a bed where we lie down.

17Branches of cedar trees will shade us;

branches of pine trees will be like a roof over our heads.

Chapter 2

1I am like an insignificant flower on the plains,

like an insignificant lily growing in the valleys.

The man speaking to the woman he loves

2Among all the other young women,

you, my dear one, are like a lily growing among thorns!

The woman speaking to herself

3Compared to other men, you, the one whom I love, are like an apple tree that produces delicious fruit and grows in the forest among common trees.

You are like a tree whose shade protects me from the sun,

and your being close to me is delightful, like eating sweet fruit.

4I want you to lead me to the place where we can make love,

and it is evident that you love me very much.

The woman speaking to the man she loves

5Strengthen and refresh me with fruit,

because the way you love me makes me feel lovesick.

The woman speaking to herself

6The man whom I love has placed his left arm under my head,

and he holds me close with his right arm.

The woman speaking to the women of Jerusalem

7You young women of Jerusalem,

I want you to solemnly promise me, while the female gazelles and female deer are listening,

that you will not cause people to love romantically

until it is the right time.

The woman speaking to herself

8Listen! Look! The man whom I love is coming.

It is as though he is leaping over the mountains

and skipping over the hills,

9like a gazelle or a young male deer.

Look! There he is! He is standing outside the wall of our house,

peering in through the window,

and looking intently through the wooden strips inside the window frame.

10The man whom I love spoke to me and said,

“My dear one, get up;

my beautiful one, come with me!

11Look, the cold season has ended;

the rain has stopped.

12The flowers are blooming throughout the country.

It is now time to sing;

we hear the doves cooing throughout our land.

13There are new figs on the fig trees,

and there are blossoms on the grapevines,

and their fragrance fills the air.

My dear one, get up;

my beautiful one, come with me!

14You are like a dove that is hiding far from me in an opening in the rocky cliff.

Allow me to see your form,

and allow me to hear your voice,

because your voice sounds sweet,

and your form is comely.”

The woman speaking to the man she loves

15There are harmful things that are like little foxes that ruin vineyards;

do not allow these things to ruin our growing relationship.

16You whom I love, you are mine, and I am yours.

You have pleasure when you kiss my lips,

as a gazelle does when eating among the lilies.

17You whom I love, come and be like a gazelle or a young male deer on the mountains in Bether,

until the evening breeze blows and the sun sets.

Chapter 3

The woman speaking to herself

1At night while I lay on my bed,
I searched for the man whom I love.
I searched for him,
but could not find him.
2So I said to myself,
“I will get up now and walk around the city,
through the streets and plazas,
to search for the man whom I love.”
So I got up and went out to search for him,
but I could not find him.
3The city watchmen saw me
while they were walking around the city.
I asked them,
“Have you seen the man whom I love?”
4As soon as I walked past them,
I found the man whom I love.
I clung to him and would not release my hold on him
until I brought him to my mother’s house,
to the bedroom of my mother who had conceived me.

The woman speaking to the women of Jerusalem

5You young women of Jerusalem,
I want you to solemnly promise me, while the female gazelles and female deer are listening,
that you will not cause people to love romantically
until it is the right time.

The woman speaking to herself

6Look! See what is coming up from the dry and uninhabited area.
Look at what is stirring up dust like clouds of smoke,
and like billows of smoke from burning myrrh and incense,
which are from the fragrant powders imported by traveling traders!

7Look! Solomon has sent his portable royal chair,
and it is surrounded by 60 bodyguards
chosen from the greatest soldiers in Israel.
8They all have swords,
and they all know how to use them.
Each one has his sword strapped to his side
and is prepared to defend against dangers that might occur during the night.
9King Solomon commanded his servants to make that royal portable chair for him;
it was made with wood from Lebanon.
10The canopy that covered it was held up by posts made with silver,
and the base of the palanquin was made with gold.
The seat was covered with purple cloth,
and the inside of the palanquin was lovingly decorated by the women of Jerusalem.
11You young women of Jerusalem,
come and look at King Solomon
wearing the headdress that his mother put on his head
on the day when he was married,
on the day when he was very happy.

Chapter 4

The man speaking to the woman he loves

1My dear one, you are beautiful,
you are very beautiful!
Beneath your veil, your eyes are as gentle and as beautiful as doves.
Your long black hair moves from side to side like a flock of black goats
moving down the slopes of Mount Gilead.
2Your teeth are very white,
white like a flock of sheep whose wool people have just cut off
and which have just come up from washing in a stream.
You have all of your teeth on both sides of your mouth;
none of them is missing.

3Your lips are the color of bright red thread,

and your mouth is beautiful.

Beneath your veil,

your cheeks are round and rosy like the halves of a pomegranate.

4Your long neck is beautiful like the tower of King David

that was built using layers of stone.

The beauty of your jeweled neck is like a thousand shields hanging on the walls of a tower;

like the beauty of a thousand warrior's shields hanging from a tower.

5Your two breasts are as beautiful as two young twin gazelles

that eat grass among lilies.

6Until the evening breeze blows

and the sun sets,

I will go to your breasts

because they are like two hills that smell like pleasant spices.

7My dear one, you are completely beautiful;

your body is perfectly formed and has no blemish!

8Come back to me, my bride. It is as though you are in Lebanon

far away, where I cannot reach you.

Come back to me.

It is as though you are inaccessible on the top of Mount Hermon

or the nearby peaks, where I cannot go to you.

Come from the mountains, where the lions have their dens

and where the leopards live.

9You who are as dear to me as a sister, my bride,

by only once quickly looking at me with your eyes, and by one strand of jewels in your necklace,

you have obtained my full affection.

10You who are as dear to me as a sister, my bride,

your love for me is delightful!

It is more delightful than wine!

The fragrance of your perfume

is more pleasing than any spice!

11When you kiss me, my bride, it is as delightful as eating honey.
Your kisses are as sweet as milk mixed with honey.
The aroma of your clothes
is like the aroma of cedar trees in Lebanon.
12You who are as dear to me as a sister, my bride, you are like a garden that the owner keeps locked
so that other men cannot enter it;
you are like a spring or a fountain that is covered
so that others may not drink from it.
13You are like an orchard of pomegranate trees
full of delicious fruit
and plenty of plants that produce henna and nard spices,
14and saffron and calamus and cinnamon
and many other kinds of incense,
myrrh and aloes,
and many other fine spices.
15You are like a spring in a garden,
like a well of fresh-flowing water,
and like streams that flow down from the mountains of Lebanon.
The woman speaking to the man she loves
16I want the north wind and the south wind to come
and blow on me,
so that the fragrance of my body will spread through the air and attract the man I love.
You whom I love, I am like your garden.
I want you to come and enjoy my body,
like someone comes into a garden and enjoys eating the delicious fruit that grows there.

Chapter 5

The man speaking to the woman he loves
1You who are as dear to me as a sister, my bride,
I am ready to go away with you now and enjoy making love with you.
It will be delightful, delightful like when I gather my myrrh with my other spices,

as wonderful as eating my honey and honeycomb,

and as enjoyable as drinking my wine with milk.

The women of Jerusalem speaking to the newly married couple

Friends, enjoy making love;

fully enjoy all that you do with each other.

The woman speaking to the women of Jerusalem

2I was asleep, and I had a dream.

In it I heard the man I love knocking at the door.

He said, “You who are as dear to me as a sister, my dear one, you who are like a dove, my flawless one.

Open the door for me

because my hair is wet from the dew,

from the mist that has fallen during the night.”

3But I had already taken my robe off;

I did not want to put it on again to open the door.

I had already washed my feet;

so I did not want them to get dirty again by answering the door.

4The man I love put his hand through the opening in the door,

and I was thrilled in my inner being that he was there.

5I got up to open the door for the man I love,

but first I put much myrrh on my hands.

The liquid myrrh was dripping from my fingers

while I unlatched the bolt.

6I opened the door for the man I love,

but he had left.

He had turned away and was gone!

I greatly despaired because he was not there.

I searched for him, but I could not find him.

I called out for him, but he did not answer.

7The city watchmen saw me while they were walking around the city.

They struck me and bruised me

because they thought I was a prostitute;

those watchmen who were guarding the city walls took my robe that was on me.

8You young women of Jerusalem,

if you see the man I love, what will you tell him?

I want you to solemnly promise me that if you see him,

you will tell him that the way he loves me makes me feel lovesick.

The women of Jerusalem speaking to the woman

9You who are the most beautiful of all the women,

why do you think that the man you love is better than other men?

In what way is he better than other men

that would cause you to want us to solemnly promise that we will tell him that?

The woman speaking to the women of Jerusalem

10It is because the man I love is handsome and healthy,

outstanding among an uncountable number of other men.

11His face is beautiful and gleams like gold; he is as precious as purest gold.

His hair is wavy

and as black as a raven.

12His eyes are as gentle and beautiful as doves

which are beside streams.

His eyes are as white as white doves

which are sitting beside pools of water.

13His cheeks are like a garden where spices grow

and like towers where spices are kept.

His lips are like lilies

that have myrrh dripping from them.

14His arms are like round gold rods,

that are decorated with precious stones.

His abdomen is like ivory

that is decorated with sapphires.

15His legs are like alabaster columns

that are set in bases made of pure gold.

He is majestic, like the mountains of Lebanon.

He is tall and strong and outstanding like the cedar trees that grow there.

16His kisses are very sweet;

he is completely attractive.

You young women of Jerusalem,

this is what the man I love, who is my friend, is like, and this is why he is better than all other men.

Chapter 6

The women of Jerusalem speaking to the woman

1You who are the most beautiful of the women,

where has the man you love gone?

Tell us which direction he went,

and we will go with you to search for him.

The woman speaking to herself

2The man who I love has come to me.

I am like his garden where pleasant spices grow.

He has come to enjoy my body as a gazelle enjoys grazing in a garden and as a person enjoys picking lilies. **3**I belong to the man I love, and he belongs to me.

He feels pleasure when he is near me,

as a gazelle does when eating among lilies.

The man speaking **4**My dear one, you are beautiful.

You are as beautiful as the city of Tirzah and as lovely as the city of Jerusalem.

You are as exciting and majestic to look at as an army with banners.

5Stop looking at me like that,

because your eyes excite me very much.

Your long black hair moves from side to side like a flock of black goats

moving down the slopes of Mount Gilead.

6Your teeth are very white,

white like a flock of sheep

that has just come up from being washed in a stream.

You have all of your teeth on both sides of your mouth;

none of them is missing.

7Beneath your veil,

your cheeks are round and rosy like the halves of a pomegranate.

8Even if a king had 60 queens and 80 concubines

and more young women in his court than anyone can count,

9none of them would be as special as she is. She is like a dove; she is flawless.

Her mother considers her to be very special;

she is her mother's favorite child.

When the young women of the king's court see her, they say that she is fortunate,

and the queens and concubines praise her.

10Look at this woman who appears like the dawn,

who is as beautiful to look at as the moon,

who is radiant like the sun,

who is as exciting and majestic to look at as an army with banners!

11I went down to the walnut tree orchard

to look at the new plants that were growing in the valley.

I wanted to see if the grapevines had budded

and if the pomegranate trees were blooming.

12All of a sudden

I imagined that I was among the chariots of my noble people.

The women of Jerusalem speaking

13Come back to us, beautiful woman from Shulam,

come back to us, in order that we may see you!

The man speaking

Why do you want to look at the beautiful woman from Shulam,

as if she were a dancer who dances to entertain armies?

Chapter 7

1You who are the daughter of a prince,

have very lovely feet in your sandals!

Your curved hips are like jewels

that have been made by a man who shapes jewels very well.

2Your navel is like a round bowl

that is always full of wine mixed with spices.

Your belly is like a pile of wheat

with lilies growing around it.

3Your breasts are as delicate as two young twin gazelles.

4Your neck is long and beautiful, like a tower made of ivory.

Your eyes sparkle like the pools of water in the city of Heshbon,

near the Bath Rabbim gate.

Your nose is beautiful like the tower in Lebanon

that faces Damascus.

5Your head is majestic like Mount Carmel.

Your long hair is shiny and black;

it is as though I, your king, am captured by your tresses.

6You are very beautiful and very lovely!

Loving you is very delightful!

7You are tall like a palm tree,

and your breasts are full and round like date clusters that hang from palm trees.

8I said to myself, "I will climb that palm tree

and take hold of those clusters of dates."

I want your breasts to be like sweet bunches of grapes that I can enjoy;

I want your breath to be like the sweet fragrance of apples. **9**I want your kisses to be like very good wine.

The woman speaking to the man she loves

When I kiss you, the man whom I love,

I want my kisses to be as if you are freely drinking wine,

and as if wine is flowing over our lips as we sleep together. **10**I belong to the man I love,

and he desires me.

11You whom I love, come with me, and let us go to the countryside,

and sleep in one of the villages.

12And let us go early to the vineyards

to see if the grapevines have budded

and if there are blossoms on them that have opened,

and to see if the pomegranate trees are blooming,

and there I will have sexual relations with you.

13The mandrake plants are producing a fragrant scent,

and the pleasures we will experience as we express our love for each other will be like choice fruits that have been stored,

new ones and old ones.

You whom I love, I have reserved my love for you as if I were storing choice fruit.

Chapter 8

1I wish that you were like my brother,

my own brother, who nursed from my mother's breasts when he was a baby.

Because then, whenever I met you outside the house, I could kiss you,

and no one would criticize me.

2I would like to bring you to my mother's house,

to where my mother, who taught me so many things, lives.

I would like to take you to my mother's house so I could have sexual relations with you there.

Having sexual relations with you would be as if I were giving you spiced wine to drink, as if I were giving you sweet pomegranate wine.

3The man I love has placed his left arm under my head

and he holds me close with his right arm.

The woman speaking to the women of Jerusalem

4You young women of Jerusalem,

I want you to solemnly promise me,

that you will not cause people to love romantically

until it is the right time.

The women of Jerusalem speaking

5Look at this woman who is coming up from the wilderness,

the woman who is leaning on the man she loves!

The young woman speaking to the man she loves

I woke you up when you were under the apple tree

at the place where your mother gave birth to you,

the place where you were born.

6Keep me close to you,

like a seal that rests against your chest as it hangs down from its cord,

or like a seal worn on your bracelet.

The strength with which I love you is as powerful as the strength of death;

it is as strong as the grave.

It is as though our love for each other bursts into flames,

and as though our love is the lightning that Yahweh creates.

7We love each other so deeply,

that how we love each other can be compared to a strong fire that no river or flood can put out.

If a man tried to cause a woman to love him by saying he would give her everything that he owns,

she would refuse.

The young woman's brothers speaking among themselves

8We have a young sister,

and her breasts are not large yet.

What should we do for her at the time that we promise some young man that he can marry her?

9We will protect her virginity,

as if we were soldiers building a battlement of silver to protect a wall.

We will protect her virginity,

like we would protect a door from intruders by covering it with boards made of cedar wood.

The woman speaking

10Like a wall that allows no one to enter, I have remained a virgin and let no man come into me;

but now my breasts are large like towers.

So I am delightful to my beloved.

11King Solomon had a vineyard at a place called Baal Hamon,

and he rented it to people for them to farm it.

He required each one to pay him one thousand pieces of silver each year for the grapes that they harvested.

12But my body is like my own vineyard, which is mine to give to the man whom I choose.

Solomon can keep the one thousand pieces of silver that he receives from renting his vineyard,

and the farmers who take care of it for him can keep the two hundred pieces of silver he pays them.

The man speaking to the woman he loves

13You, the woman I love, who are staying in the gardens,

my friends are eagerly listening so that they can hear you speak;

speak to me!

The young woman speaking to the man she loves

14You whom I love, come to me quickly!

Run to me like a gazelle or a young male deer

runs across mountains where spices grow.

Joel

Chapter 1

1I am Joel son of Pethuel. This is a message that Yahweh gave to me.

2You leaders {of Israel}, and everyone else who lives in this country, listen {to this message}!
Nothing like this has ever happened during the time that we have lived
or during the time when our ancestors lived.

3Tell your children about it,
and tell your children to tell it to their children,
and tell your grandchildren to tell it to their children.

4Tell them this:
The first swarm of locusts came and cut many of the leaves of the crops;
then another swarm came and ate the rest of the leaves,
then hopping locusts came and ate what they had left,
and finally, another swarm came
and they destroyed everything else.

5You people who are drunk, wake up and cry!
Cry loudly, all of you who drink wine,
because all the grapes are ruined,
and so there will be no new wine!

6Huge swarms of locusts have entered our country.
They are like a powerful army
that has very many soldiers;
no one can count them.
The locusts have teeth that are as sharp as the teeth of lions!

7They have destroyed our grapevines and our fig trees
by stripping off and eating all the bark,
with the result that the branches are white and bare.

8Cry and wail as a young woman does
when the young man to whom she was engaged has died.

9There is no more flour or wine for us to offer as sacrifices at Yahweh’s temple,

so the priests who serve Yahweh are mourning.

10The locusts have ruined the {crops in the} fields.

It is as though the ground itself is mourning

because the grain is gone;

there will be no {grapes to make} wine,

and there is no more {olive} oil.

11You farmers, despair!

You who take care of grapevines, cry loudly,

because the crops in the field are gone;

there is no wheat or barley growing any more.

12The grapevines and the fig trees have withered,

and the pomegranate trees, palm trees, and apricot trees have also dried up.

The people are no longer joyful.

13You priests, put on {rough sack} clothes and wail.

You who serve my God {by offering sacrifices} on the altar,

wear those sack clothes all night {to show that you are mourning},

because there is no flour or wine to be offered at the temple of your God.

14Set apart a day for when the people should go without food.

Tell the leaders and the other people to gather at the temple

and to cry out to Yahweh {there}.

15It will soon be the time when Yahweh, {who is} the Almighty God, will punish us,

when he will cause us to experience more disasters.

That will be a terrible time!

16Our crops are already gone,

and no {one is} rejoicing at all at the temple of our God.

17When we plant seeds, {they do not grow;}

they dry up in the ground,

so there are no crops to harvest.

Our barns are empty;

there is no grain {to store in them}.

18Our cattle groan, searching for a pasture with some grass to eat but not finding any.

The sheep also {bleat because they} are suffering.

19Yahweh, I cry out to you,

because {it is as though} a fire has completely burned our pastures and our forests.

20The wild animals also are desperate for you to help them,

because all the streams have dried up.

The dryness is like a fire burning up the wilderness pastures.

Chapter 2

1Blow horns on Mount Zion,

God's sacred hill {in Jerusalem}!

Shout to the people of Judah that they should {be afraid and} tremble,

because it will soon be the time for Yahweh to punish us {further}.

2That will be a very dark and gloomy day;

A huge swarm of locusts forms a black cloud, making it very dark.

The swarm spreads over the mountains like the light of dawn;

they are like a mighty army.

Nothing like this has ever happened before,

and nothing like this will ever happen again.

3{It is as though} the locusts set everything on fire wherever they go.

In front of them, the land was {as beautiful} as the garden of Eden,

but behind them {the land is like} a desert,

and nothing is able to withstand them.

4The locusts resemble horses

and they run like war horses.

5Leaping over the mountaintops,

they make a noise like rumbling chariots,

like a mighty army that is preparing for a battle,

or like the roar of a fire that burns up stubble {in a field}.

6When people see them coming,

they become very pale and frightened.

7The locusts run and climb over walls like soldiers do;

each one continues on its way

and never turns aside from its course.

8They rush straight ahead

without pushing each other.

People try to fight against them,

but that does not cause them to stop.

9They swarm over the city walls and enter our houses;

they enter through our windows as thieves do.

10{It is as though} they cause the earth to shake and the sky to tremble as they come.

The sun and the moon become dark,

and the stars do not shine

{because there are so many locusts in the sky}.

11Yahweh commands this army {of countless locusts},

and they obey him powerfully.

This time during which Yahweh is judging and punishing us is very terrible,

{with the result that it seems that} no one can survive it.

12But Yahweh says,

“In spite of these disasters that you have experienced,

you can still reconcile yourselves to me in your inner being.

Weep, and mourn, and fast {to show that you are sorry that you have abandoned me}.”

13Do not tear {only} your clothes

{to show that you are sorry};

{more importantly,} show in your inner being that you are truly sorry

and {in that way} reconcile yourselves to Yahweh your God.

{Do this} because Yahweh is merciful and kind;

he does not quickly become angry;

instead, he greatly and faithfully loves us,

and he does not like to punish us.

14It is possible that he will change his mind about punishing {you}

and, instead, act mercifully {toward you}.

If he does that, he will bless you
by giving you plenty of grain and wine
so that you can offer {some of} those things for sacrifices to our God, Yahweh.
15Blow the {signal} horns on Mount Zion!
Gather the people together!
Set apart time to fast{, to show that you are sorry for your sins}.
16Gather everyone together and prepare them for a special meeting for Yahweh.
Bring everyone—
the old people and the children, even the babies;
yes, even summon bridegrooms and brides from their rooms.
17Tell the priests who serve Yahweh to cry all the way from the entrance of the temple to the altar
and to pray this:
“Yahweh, be merciful to us, your people;
do not allow people from other nations to despise us;
do not allow them to rule over us and say among themselves,
‘Their God has abandoned them!’”
18Then Yahweh showed that he cared deeply about his people
and that he would act mercifully toward them.
19When the people prayed,
Yahweh answered and said,
“I will give you plenty of grain and wine and olive oil,
and you will be satisfied.
I will no longer allow other nations to insult you.
20When an army from the north comes {to attack you},
I will force them to continue {past Jerusalem}
into the desert.
Some will go into the {Dead} Sea in the east,
and some will go into the {Mediterranean} Sea in the west.
{There they will all die,} and their bodies will stink powerfully,
because they were powerful in what they did.”
21Do not be afraid, people, for what might happen to the land.

You can rejoice, because Yahweh will be powerful in what he does! **22**And the wild animals should not be afraid,
because the meadows will soon become green again;
the fig trees and other trees will be full of fruit,
and the grapevines will be covered with grapes.
23You people of Jerusalem,
rejoice about what Yahweh, your God, will do {for you}.
He will send rain to deliver you at the right time—
before planting and before harvesting,
as he did previously.
24The ground where you thresh the grain will be covered with grain,
and your vats where you store the fresh grape juice and olive oil will be full.
25Yahweh said, “I will repay you for everything that those great swarms of locusts destroyed,
that enormous army that I sent to attack you.
26Then you will eat until your stomachs are full.
Then you will praise me, Yahweh, your God,
for the wonderful things that I have done for you,
and never again will I let others shame you, my people.
27When that happens, you will know that I am {always} among you,
that I am Yahweh, your God,
and that there is no other {God}.
Never again will I let others shame you.”
28“Some time later, I will give my Spirit to many people.
You sons and daughters will proclaim messages that come directly from me.
Your old men will have dreams that come from me,
and your young men will have visions that come from me.
29At that time, I will generously give my Spirit even to servants, both men and women.
30I will do unusual things on the earth and in the sky.
On the earth, there will be much bloodshed,
{and there will be} very large fires and smoke that resembles huge clouds.
31In the sky, the sun will become dark, and the moon will become {as red as} blood.
{Those things will happen} before that great and terrible day when I, Yahweh, come {to judge all people}.

32And I will do this: I will save everyone who worships me.

As I have said before, ‘On Mount Zion in Jerusalem I will make a way for them to escape;

those whom I have chosen will survive.’”

Chapter 3

1Yahweh says this:

“At that time, I will bring back the people whom their enemies took away from Jerusalem and from {other places in} Judah.

2Then in the Valley of Jehoshaphat I will gather together {the people of} all of the other nations;

there I will judge {and punish} them

because they scattered my Israelite people

and forced them to go to other countries,

and because they divided up my land {among themselves}.

3{I will judge them} also {because} they played games of chance to determine who would get {each of} my people.

They traded {some of the} Israelite boys for prostitutes,

and they sold {some of the} Israelite girls to get {money to buy} wine, and they drank {it}.

4You people of the cities of Tyre and Sidon, and you people of Philistia—you have no reason to be angry with me. You are behaving as if you are trying to avenge yourselves on me for something. If that is what you are doing, I will very quickly do the same thing to you. **5**You took the silver and gold and other valuable things from my temple and put them into your own temples. **6**You dragged away the people of Jerusalem and {other places in} Judah, and you took them far away from their homes and sold them to Greek traders.

7But I will make it possible for my people to return from the places to which you sold them, and I will do to you what you did to them. **8**Then I will cause people to take {some of} your sons and your daughters and sell them to the people of Judah! And then they will sell {some of} them to the Sabean people, who live far away. {That will certainly happen} because I, Yahweh, have said it.”

9Proclaim to {the people of} all nations,

“Prepare for a war!

Summon your soldiers;

tell them to stand in their battle positions.

10Take your plows and make swords from them;

take your pruning knives and make spears from them.

{Even} the weak {people} must {also} act like {they are} strong {soldiers}.

11All of {you people from} the nations that are near Judah

must come quickly and gather there.”

But Yahweh, {when that happens,} send your army {of angels to attack them}!

12Yahweh says, “The {people in the} nations near Judah must get ready and come to the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

There I will sit as a judge, and I will punish them.

13{They are like} crops that are ready for farmers to harvest them;

so {strike them as a farmer} swings his sickle to cut the grain.

{They are like} large piles of grapes in the pits where farmers will press them;

{so crush them as a farmer tramples on the grapes.}

{Punish them severely} because they are very wicked.

{If all of the wicked things that they have done became grape juice,} they are so wicked that the juice would make the vats overflow.”

14There will be huge crowds of people in that Valley of Judgment.

It will soon be the time that Yahweh will punish them in that Valley of Judgment.

15At that time there will be no light from the sun or moon,

and the stars will not shine.

16From Mount Zion in Jerusalem, Yahweh will speak forcefully;

his voice will be like thunder,

and his voice will cause the sky and the earth to shake.

But Yahweh will protect his people;

he will be like a strong wall around the people of Israel.

17Yahweh says, “At that time, you {Israelite people} will know that I am Yahweh, your God.

I live on Zion, my holy hill.

Jerusalem will be a holy city,

and soldiers from other countries will never conquer it again.

18At that time, there will be vineyards bearing sweet grapes on the mountains,

and your cattle and goats on those hills will produce plenty of milk.

The streams in Judah will have abundant water,

and a stream will flow from my temple into the Valley of Acacia {northeast of the Dead Sea}.

19{The armies of} Egypt and Edom attacked the people of Judah

and killed many people there who had not done anything that was wrong.

As a result, those countries will become wastelands, with no one living there any longer.

20But there will always be people living throughout Judea

and in Jerusalem, forever. **21**I, Yahweh, live on Mount Zion {in Jerusalem},

and I will not punish people {further} for killing my people, for which I {previously} punished them.”

Obadiah

Chapter 1

1This is a message that Yahweh our God gave to {me,} Obadiah, about the people of Edom. Yahweh our God has said this to us:

“I have sent a messenger to other nations,

telling them to prepare to go and attack Edom.” **2**{Now Yahweh says this to the people of Edom:}

“Listen to me—I will soon cause you to become the weakest

and most despised nation {on the earth}.

3Your capital city is high in the rocky cliffs,

and you are very proud.

You think that you are safe there—that no army can conquer you.

But you have deceived yourselves.

4Even if you could live where eagles live or even higher than that, among the stars,

you would still not be safe there from the attackers that I am sending to you. I, Yahweh, declare this {to you}.

5When thieves break into someone’s house during the night and rob them,

they certainly steal only the things that they want.

And people who pick grapes always leave a few grapes on the vines.

But{, unlike them,} attackers will destroy your country completely!

6Descendants of Esau, these attackers will completely take away everything that you own.

They will even find {and take away} the valuable things that you have hidden.

7All your allies will turn against you, and they will force you to leave your country.

Those with whom you have peace now will trick you and defeat you.

Those who eat meals with you now are planning to trap you.

You people of Edom do not understand any of this.

8I, Yahweh, declare that at that time,

I will certainly destroy {even} Edom’s {famous} wise men. No one living in those cliffs will know what to do any more.

9The soldiers in the army of Edom will become terrified.

Then when your army stops fighting, the attackers will completely destroy all you people who live in the land of Edom.”

10"{All of this will happen because} you acted cruelly to your relatives who are descendants of Jacob{, the twin brother of your ancestor Esau}.

So now everyone will be ashamed of you, and the attackers will destroy you forever.

11At the time when strangers carried away the Israelite's wealth, you did nothing to help them.

Foreigners conquered all the cities of Judah, and they even took whatever they wanted from Jerusalem.

And you were just as bad as those foreigners{, because you did nothing to help}.

12You should not have gloated about the disaster that the Israelites were experiencing.

You should not have been happy when their towns were ruined.

You should not have made fun of them when they were suffering.

13They are my people, so you should not have entered their city gates when they were experiencing this terrible disaster.

Yes, you! You should not have enjoyed watching them suffer.

You women should not have taken away their valuable possessions.

14You should not have stood at the crossroads to kill some of the Israelites who were trying to escape.

You should not have captured others of them who had survived {and turned them over to their enemies} when they were experiencing those disasters."

15"{You should have helped the Israelites,} because the time is coming soon when I, Yahweh, will judge and punish all the nations.

I will do the same things to you {people of Edom} that you did to others.

The same {evil} things that you did to others will happen to you.

16{The people of Edom should not have done these evil things to you, people of Israel,} because in the way that you suffered in Jerusalem, the hill where my holy temple is,

in that same way I will continue to punish all the other nations.

I will punish them severely and make them disappear completely.

17But some people in Jerusalem will survive,

and Jerusalem will become a holy place.

Then the Israelites will once again occupy the land that belongs to them.

18The people of Israel will be like a fire, and the people of Edom will be like dry grass.

They will destroy the people of Edom, just as fire completely burns up dry grass.

None of the descendants of Edom will survive.

This will certainly happen because I, Yahweh, have said it will happen."

19The Israelites who live in the southern wilderness of Judea will capture the land of Edom.

The Israelites who live in the western foothills will capture the region of Phoenicia.

The Israelites will also capture the areas that belonged to {the tribe of} Ephraim and that surrounded {the city of} Samaria {to the north}.

The people of the tribe of Benjamin will capture the region east of the Jordan River.

20A great number of the people from {the kingdom of} Israel were captured and taken away from their homes. They lived in the land of Canaan. {But they will return, and} they will capture and occupy that land as far {north} as Zarephath.

Many of the people were captured and taken away from Jerusalem. They now live in Sepharad. They will {return and} occupy the cities in the southern wilderness of Judea.

21{After} Israel's military leaders {conquer the land of Edom, they} will {then} rule over Edom from high up in Jerusalem.

And Yahweh will be their king.

Jonah

Chapter 1

1There was a man named Jonah, the son of Amittai. It happened {one day} that Yahweh spoke to him. This is what Yahweh said: **2**"I have seen that the people of Nineveh are continually doing things that are very evil. Therefore, get moving. Go to Nineveh, that huge capital city {of Assyria}, and proclaim to the people there that I am planning to punish them for their evil actions." **3**So Jonah went, {but in the opposite direction,} towards the {far-away} city of Tarshish, thinking that he could get away from Yahweh there. He went down to {the port at} the city of Joppa and found a ship that was about to go to Tarshish. The captain of the ship asked him for money, and he gave it to him. Then he went down into the ship in order to go with the crew of the ship to Tarshish, in order to get away from Yahweh.

4But Yahweh caused a strong wind to blow over the sea, and such an enormous storm happened that the waves were about to break the ship apart. **5**The sailors were frightened and each one prayed loudly to the god that he worshiped {for that god to save them from the storm}. They even threw the cargo from the ship into the sea in order to make the ship lighter, so that it would not so easily {take on water and} sink. While all of this was going on, Jonah was down inside the ship, lying down and sleeping soundly!

6Then the captain of the crew went down to where Jonah was {sleeping}. He {wakened Jonah and} said to him, "Something must be wrong with you, to sleep during a storm like this! Get up! Pray earnestly to the god that you worship! Perhaps that god will think about us and save us."

7After a while the sailors started to say to each other, "We need to cast lots, to determine who has caused this terrible thing to happen to us!" They all agreed, so they cast lots, and the lot indicated Jonah.

8So the sailors said these things to Jonah: "You must tell us who has caused this terrible thing to happen to us. What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What country are you from? What group of people do you belong to?"

9Jonah answered them, "I am a Hebrew. I worship Yahweh, the {One True} God who lives in heaven. He is the one who made both the sea and the land." **10**Jonah also told the sailors that he was trying to get away from Yahweh {in order to avoid doing something that Yahweh had told him to do}. So now{, when they learned that Yahweh was the one controlling the sea,} they were terrified.

One of the sailors said to Jonah, "You have done a terrible thing! {Now we are all about to die because of you!}"
11The storm continued to become worse, and the waves continued to become bigger. So one of the sailors asked Jonah, "What should we do to you so that the sea might calm down and stop threatening us?"

12Jonah told them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea. If you do that, the sea will calm down and stop threatening you. This will work because I am certain that this terrible storm happened to you because I did not do what Yahweh told me to do."

13But the sailors {did not want to do that. Instead, they} tried hard to row the ship back to the land. But they could not do it because the waves became even bigger and stronger against them. **14**Finally, all of the sailors prayed to Yahweh, "O Yahweh, you are the one controlling all of these things {that have happened to us, including this storm and the lot that we cast}. Therefore we beg you, Yahweh, please do not let us die because of this man. No, do not kill us for killing someone who has done nothing against us." **15**Then they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea. Immediately, the sea became calm. **16**When that happened, the sailors became greatly awed {at how powerful Yahweh was}. They offered a sacrifice to Yahweh and solemnly promised to worship him.

17Meanwhile, Yahweh caused a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights.

Chapter 2

1While he was inside the fish, Jonah prayed to Yahweh, the God whom he worshiped. **2**This is what he said:

“When I was deeply distressed, I prayed to Yahweh {to rescue me}, and he did.

Even though I was in the belly {of a fish} where I thought I would die, yet {even there} you heard my voice and listened to me {when I begged for you to help me}.

3You had thrown me into the deep water, into the middle of the sea where the currents swirled around me.

All of those terrible waves that you made passed above me.

4But as for me, I thought, ‘You have thrown me away; you do not care even to look at me;

even so I may still see your holy temple again.’

5Water was all around me, close to ending my life; {yes,} deep water surrounded me;

seaweed became wrapped around my head.

6I went down as far as the place where the mountains start rising from the bottom of the sea; I felt as though the earth was a prison with no possible way for me to escape.

But you, Yahweh God, whom I worship, rescued me from going down to the place of the dead.

7When I was almost dead, I thought about you, Yahweh{, to ask you for help}.

And from your holy place where you live, you accepted my prayer.

8Those who worship worthless idols

reject you, the one who would always be faithful to them.

9But I {will not do that. Rather}, I will give a sacrifice to you as I loudly thank you.

I will do what I have solemnly promised {you} that I would do.

Yahweh, you are the only One True God who saves people.”

10Then Yahweh commanded the {huge} fish {to spew out Jonah}, and the fish spewed out Jonah onto the land.

Chapter 3

1Then Yahweh spoke to Jonah again. This is what Yahweh said: **2**“Get moving! Go to Nineveh, the large capital city {of Assyria}, and preach to the people who live there the message that I tell you to preach to them.” **3**This time, Jonah got moving and went to Nineveh, just as Yahweh had told him to do.

Now Nineveh was an extremely large city. It was so large that a person had to walk for three days {to go completely through it}. **4**When Jonah arrived, he began walking through the city for about one day. Then he proclaimed to the people in the city, “Forty days from now, God will destroy Nineveh!”

5The people of Nineveh believed the message from God {that Jonah proclaimed}. They decided that everyone should fast and wear coarse cloth on their bodies {in order to show that they were sorry for the evil things that they had been doing}. So everyone in the city did that, from the most important people to the least important people. **6**When the king of Nineveh heard about the message {that Jonah was preaching}, he got up from his throne. He took off his royal robes, put on coarse cloth instead, and sat down on a heap of cold ashes. {He did all this to show that he also was sorry for the evil actions that he had been doing.}

7Then he sent messengers to proclaim to the people in Nineveh: “The king and his officials have decreed that no person or animal may taste any food nor drink any water. Even the cows and the sheep may not graze. **8**Every person and every {domestic} animal must wear coarse cloth on their bodies. Everyone must pray fervently to God. Also, everyone must stop doing the evil things that they have been doing and the violent things that they have been doing {to other people}. **9**If everyone does those things, it is possible that this god will change his mind and be merciful to us. He may relent from being so angry with us, with the result that we will live.”

10So the people did those things and stopped doing the evil actions that they had been doing. God saw all of this. So God had mercy on them and did not destroy them as he had said he would do. {Even though he had said that,} he did not do it.

Chapter 4

1For Jonah, it was wrong, terribly wrong{, that God did not destroy Nineveh}. He became very angry about it. **2**He prayed to Yahweh, “See! Yahweh, This is exactly what I said would happen even before I left home! I knew that you are a God who acts very kindly and compassionately {toward all people}. You do not quickly become angry {with people who act in evil ways}. You love people very much, and you prefer to be merciful to people rather than to punish them. Therefore, I ran away to go to Tarshish in order to stop this very thing from happening. **3**So now, Yahweh, please kill me, because I would rather die than continue to live {if you do not destroy Nineveh}.”

4Yahweh replied, “It is wrong for you to be angry {that I did not destroy Nineveh}.”

5Then Jonah left the city {of Nineveh} and sat down {a short distance away} on the east side of the city. There he made a small shelter to shade himself {from the sun}. He stayed under the shelter and waited to see what would happen to the city.

6Then Yahweh God caused a plant to grow up {very quickly} above Jonah to shade his head {from the sun}. Yahweh did that in order to remove the bad things that Jonah was experiencing. Jonah was very happy to have this plant {that shaded him from the sun}. **7**Then, at dawn the next day, God caused a worm to chew the plant so much that the plant withered away. **8**Then, shortly after the sun had risen, God caused a hot wind to blow from the east. The sun shone very hotly on Jonah’s head, and Jonah began to feel faint. He wanted to die and he exclaimed, “It would be better for me to die than to continue living!”

9Then God said to Jonah, “Is it right for you to be angry about what happened to the plant?”

Jonah replied, “Yes, it is right for me to be angry! I am so angry that I want to die!”

10Then Yahweh said to him, “As for you, you felt very sad about the plant when it died, even though you did not work to take care of it, nor did you do anything to make it grow. It grew up in one night, and it completely withered by the end of the next night. **11**In the same way, but very much more, it is right for me to feel sad about

{destroying} the huge city of Nineveh. There are more than 120, 000 people living there who do not know right from wrong. There are also many animals. {I created all of them, so} it is right for me to be concerned about them.”

Nahum

Chapter 1

1I am Nahum, from {the village of} Elkosh. This is a message about {the city of} Nineveh, a message {that Yahweh gave me} in a vision.

2Yahweh our God tolerates no rival gods to himself.

Yahweh is very angry with those who worship other gods, and he punishes them.

He continues to be angry with those who oppose him.

3Yahweh does not quickly become angry;

but he is very powerful,

and he will certainly punish {those who have done evil things}.

Wherever Yahweh walks, there are whirlwinds and storms,

and the clouds are like dust around his feet.

4When he commands oceans and rivers to become dry, they dry up.

He causes the grass to wither

in the fields in the region of Bashan and on the slopes of Mount Carmel,

and he causes the flowers in Lebanon to fade.

5When he appears, it is as though the mountains quake and the hills melt;

the earth quakes before him, and all the people on the earth {tremble}.

6There is no one who can resist him when he becomes extremely angry;

there is no one who can survive when Yahweh is angry with him.

When he is very angry, it is as though fire blazes out from him;

it is as though mountains explode into pieces before him.

7Yahweh is good;

he protects us, his people, when we experience troubles.

He takes care of those who trust in him.

8But he will completely destroy Nineveh with an overwhelming flood.

Wherever his enemies go,

terrible things will happen to them. **9**So it is useless for you people of Nineveh to plot against Yahweh.

He will destroy your plan quickly;

he will not need to strike you two times.

10The Ninevites will be like tangled thorn-bushes or dry stubble {in a fire};

they will be like the wine in their own cups.

All of those things disappear quickly and completely.

11Yes, in the city of Nineveh there are people who advise and plan evil deeds against Yahweh. **12**But this is what Yahweh says {to the people of Judah}:

“Although the nation of Assyria has very many people

and {its army} is very powerful,

Nevertheless I will shear them {like helpless sheep} and destroy those who plan evil deeds.

Although I have punished you,

I will not punish you again.

13Now I will cause the people of Assyria to no longer enslave you; it will be as though I will break off the chains on your hands and feet.”

14And this is what Yahweh also declares about the people of Nineveh:

“The people of Nineveh will not have any descendants who will continue to have their family names.

And I will destroy all the wooden and metal idols

that are in their temples.

I will cause them to be killed and sent to their graves, because they are vile!”

15You people of Judah, look to the mountains! A messenger will come from there,

and he will bring good news to you.

He will declare that you will now have peace.

So keep your festivals, and do what you solemnly promised Yahweh that you would do.

You can do this because your wicked enemies will not invade your country again,

because I will destroy them completely.

Chapter 2

1You people of Nineveh, your enemies are coming to attack you. So place guards on the tops of the walls around the city! Guard the roads into the city! Get ready to fight! Gather all of your troops together! **2**Even though soldiers have pillaged the people of Jacob and destroyed their vineyards, Yahweh will cause other nations to honor them again. Yes, Jacob and Israel will be majestic again. **3**The shields of Yahweh’s soldiers are red,

and they will wear bright red uniforms.

The metal of their chariot wheels will flash like fire when they prepare them for battle.

The spears will look like {a forest of} quivering cypress trees {as the soldiers raise them}.

4Their chariots dash through the streets of Nineveh

and rush furiously through the plazas.

Appearing to move as quickly as lightning,

they look like flaming torches.

5The {attacking} commander calls to his officers

and they come to him so quickly that they stumble.

They run up to the city wall {to attack it};

they set up a large wooden shield {above the soldiers to protect them}.

6Soldiers open the floodgates that hold back the rivers,

and the palace collapses.

7Yahweh decrees that soldiers will take the inhabitants of Nineveh away as captives.

The women of Nineveh moan like doves

and beat their breasts {to show that they are very sad}. **8**The people of Nineveh used to be as calm as a pool of water,

but now they are running away.

{The officials shout,} “Stop! Stop!”

But the people will not even look back {as they run away}.

9{The attackers say to each other,}

“Seize the silver!

Grab the gold!

There is a huge amount {of very valuable things in the city};

there are many wonderful things of all kinds!”

10Soldiers have completely looted and destroyed {the city of Nineveh}. The people of Nineveh are afraid, trembling, and deeply sorrowful. Their faces have all become pale {with fear}.

11{After that happens, people will say,}

“Nineveh used to be full of great and powerful people!

It was like a den full of lions,

where the male and female lions lived with their cubs, where they fed the young ones, where the inhabitants were afraid of nothing.

12The officials in Nineveh were like lions that killed animals for their cubs, strangled others for their lionesses, and kept killing more to fill their dens with prey.” **13**Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says to the people of Nineveh,

“I am your enemy;

I will burn up your chariots.

I will cause soldiers to kill your young men.

I will make sure that your soldiers will never again conquer other nations and seize their valuable possessions.

Your messengers will never again disturb the people of other nations.”

Chapter 3

1Terrible things will happen to Nineveh,

that city that is full of people who continually murder {people} and lie {to others} and steal {valuable things from people in other countries}.

Their armies constantly bring to the city the people and things that they have stolen. **2**{But now listen as the enemy soldiers come to attack Nineveh!} Listen to them cracking their whips, and listen to the rattle of their {chariot} wheels!

Listen to their galloping horses and their chariots as they bounce along! **3**Look at their flashing swords and glittering spears as the horsemen race forward!

The enemy soldiers will kill many people of Nineveh.

There will be piles of corpses, so many dead bodies that people will stumble over them. **4**All of that will happen because Nineveh is like a beautiful prostitute

who attracts many men and destroys them,

and who practices witchcraft.

The people of Nineveh teach people of other nations to worship Nineveh’s idols.

They control other people through witchcraft

and cause them to become their slaves.

5So Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says to the people of Nineveh:

“I am your enemy, and I will completely humiliate you

in the sight of the people of other nations,

just as people humiliate a woman who has committed adultery

by lifting her skirt over her head so that people can see her naked body.

People of other nations will be ashamed of you.

6It will be as though I am throwing garbage on you;

I will show others that I despise you very much,

and I will cause everyone to publicly ridicule you.

7All those who see you will run away from you and say,

‘Nineveh lies in ruins,

but absolutely no one will mourn for it.’

People of Nineveh, no one will want to comfort you.”

8Nineveh is not stronger than the city of Thebes was.

Thebes was an important city beside the Nile River;

deep water protected Thebes on all sides.

9The rulers of Cush and Egypt helped Thebes; together they were very strong.

The governments of the nearby countries of Put and Libya

were also allies of Thebes.

10Nevertheless, enemies conquered Thebes

and took its people as captives.

The enemies smashed the babies of Thebes to death in the streets.

The enemies used marked stones to choose

which officials they would take as slaves.

The enemies led all of the leaders of Thebes away in chains.

11You people of Nineveh will similarly become confused.

You will search for places to hide

from your enemies as they did.

12

When people want to eat the first figs, all they have to do is shake the fig tree and the figs fall into their mouths.

Your enemies will capture your fortresses that quickly and easily.

13Look at your soldiers!

They are as weak as women!

The gates of your cities will be wide open

to allow your enemies to enter them,

and your enemies will burn the beams {of those gates}.

14{People of Nineveh,} store up water now to use when your enemies surround the city!

Make your defensive buildings stronger!

Dig up clay and trample it {to make it soft};

put it into molds to make bricks {to strengthen the walls}!

15Nevertheless, your enemies will burn your city;

they will kill you with their swords;

they will kill you as locusts destroy crops.

Increase your population like grasshoppers and swarms of locusts! **16**In your city there are now very many merchants;

almost more than one could count.

But {when your city is being destroyed,}

they will take all the valuable things and quickly leave,

like locusts that strip the leaves from plants and then fly away.

17Your leaders are also like a swarm of locusts

that crowd together on the stone walls on a cold day.

When the sun shines, they fly away,

and no one knows where they have gone.

18

King of Assyria, all of your important people will die.

Your people will scatter to many different places in the mountains,

and there will be no one to gather them together. **19**Nothing can help you now.

You are like someone who has a fatal wound.

All of those who hear about what has happened to you will {joyfully} clap their hands about it.

They will do this because all of them have suffered from your continual evil actions.

Zephaniah

Chapter 1

1These are the messages that Yahweh spoke through Zephaniah during the time when Josiah, the son of Amon, was the king of Judah. Zephaniah was the son of Cushi. Cushi was the son of Gedaliah. Gedaliah was the son of Amariah. And Amariah was the son of King Hezekiah.

2Yahweh says,

“I will completely destroy creatures all over the earth.”

3Yahweh says,

“I am going to destroy the people and animals that live on the earth.

I am going to destroy the birds that fly in the sky and the fish that swim in the sea.

I am going to destroy the idols that represent false gods,

and I am going to destroy the people who worship those idols.

I will do this so that there will not be wicked people on the earth.

4I am going to punish the people who live in the city of Jerusalem and in other places in the kingdom of Judah.

I am going to destroy everything in Jerusalem that is related to the worship of the false god Baal.

No one will even remember that there used to be priests of Baal in Jerusalem.

And no one will remember the priests descended from Aaron who helped people worship Baal.

5I am going to punish the people who have been going up onto the flat roofs of their houses

in order to worship the sun, moon, and stars.

I am also going to punish the people who claim to worship me

but who swear oaths in the name of the false god Milcom.

6Finally, I am also going to punish the people who used to worship me but no longer do.

I am going to punish the people who no longer ask for my help or ask me to tell them what they should do.”

7Yahweh is the God whom you should worship.

Soon he will judge and punish people,

so show your respect for him by keeping quiet.

Be respectful, because Yahweh is getting ready to destroy the people of Judah.

He has decided to allow the enemies of Judah to come and destroy them.

8Yahweh says, “At the time when I destroy the people of Judah,

I will punish their officials and the king’s sons

and all those who worship foreign gods.

9At that time, I will punish all the officials who force their way into people's homes

and take away what they own in order to make themselves rich."

10Yahweh also says, "At the time when I destroy the kingdom of Judah,

people will cry out in distress at the Fish Gate of Jerusalem.

People will wail with sorrow in the Second Quarter of the city.

People will hear a loud crash of buildings collapsing in the towns on the hills that surround the city.

11Your enemies are going to slaughter all those who buy and sell goods for money,

so all you people who live in the market area of Jerusalem should wail.

12At that time, it will be as if I light lanterns and search even in the darkest places in Jerusalem

to find wicked people and punish them.

I am going to punish the people who do not even care that they are doing wicked things.

They wrongly think that I, Yahweh, do not make people experience the consequences of their actions.

13So an enemy army is going to come and destroy their houses completely.

Then that army will carry away their valuable possessions.

{This will fulfill what I told the Israelites would happen if they disobeyed me:}

'The people will build houses,

but they will not live in them.

They will plant vineyards,

but they will not be able to make wine from the grapes and drink it.'

14It will soon be the terrible time when I, Yahweh, destroy the people who have sinned against me.

Yes, I am going to do that very soon.

The people of Judah will cry out in sorrow at that time.

Then even the strong soldiers who are trying to defend them will wail in despair.

15That will be a time when I, Yahweh, show that I am very angry.

It will be a time when people experience much trouble.

At that time, an enemy army will destroy many things.

It will be a very sad time.

People will feel the way they do when black clouds cover the sky.

16It will be a time when soldiers blow ram's horns and shout to call other soldiers to come and fight.

Your enemies will tear down the walls around your cities

and the high towers at the corners of those walls.

17Because you have sinned against me, Yahweh,

I am going to cause you people of Judah to suffer greatly.

{As I told the Israelites would happen if they sinned against me,}

‘You will wander around, not knowing where to go, as if you were blind.’

Your enemies will stab you with their weapons

so that your blood and your insides pour out in great quantities.

18At the time when I, Yahweh, show how angry I am with you,

you will not be able to save yourselves by giving silver or gold to your enemies.”

Because Yahweh is very angry that people have worshiped false gods,

he is going to destroy wicked people all over the world.

Indeed, he is soon going to destroy wicked people no matter where they live in the world.

Chapter 2

1You people of Judah ought to be ashamed of your sins!

You should certainly gather together {and ask Yahweh to be merciful to you}.

2{Gather together and pray for mercy}

before Yahweh punishes you as he has said he will.

Otherwise he will destroy you completely,

just as the wind blows chaff away entirely.

Yahweh is very angry with you,

and if you do not repent, he will punish you. **3**All of you people in Judah who are willing to humble yourselves,

worship Yahweh and obey what he has commanded.

Try to do what is right

and make sure that you stay humble.

If you do that, perhaps Yahweh will protect you

when he punishes other people for their sins.

4{When Yahweh punishes the Philistines,}

the cities of Gaza and Ashkelon will lose all of their inhabitants.

An army will attack the city of Ashdod in broad daylight and drive away all of its people.

An army will also drive away the people of the city of Ekron.

5Terrible things will happen to you Philistine people! You live near the sea.

Yahweh has said that he will punish you Philistines who live in that part of the land of Canaan.

He will punish you until everyone who used to live there is dead.

6There will no longer be any cities in the seaside land of Philistia.

There will only be grass.

Shepherds will keep their sheep there so that they can eat the grass.

7The Judean people who survive will go and live in that land.

They will graze their sheep in those pastures.

They will move into the houses that the Philistines have abandoned in the city of Ashkelon.

This will happen because those Judeans will worship Yahweh once again as their God.

Yahweh will take care of them and make them prosperous again.

8-9 Yahweh is the commander of the heavenly armies and the God of the Israelites. He says this:

“I have heard the people of Moab and Ammon insult my people.

I have seen them stealing territory from my people. So now I swear that I am going to destroy Moab and Ammon

as completely as I destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.

Crops will no longer grow on their land, only weeds.

The only way people will be able to make a living from that land will be to dig in the ground to get salt from the salt deposits there.

No one will ever rebuild the buildings that were there.

My people who survive will take away all the valuable possessions that once belonged to the Moabites and Ammonites.

Those people will be the ones who own that land.”

10The people of Moab and Ammon will get what they deserve for having been so proud.

They should not have insulted the people who belong to Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies.

They should not have tried to take away their land.

11The people of Moab and Ammon will be greatly afraid when Yahweh punishes them.

He will do that so powerfully that people will stop worshiping all other gods.

People in every nation will worship Yahweh instead.

Each person will do that in his own country.

12Yahweh has also said that he will slaughter the people of Ethiopia.

13Yahweh will also punish and destroy the people of Assyria.

They live in a land that is northeast of us.

He will cause an enemy army to destroy their capital city of Nineveh.

It will become a place where no plants grow, like the desert.

14Groups of many different kinds of wild animals will live where Nineveh used to be.

Various kinds of owls will make their nests on top of the columns of its destroyed buildings.

Those owls will sometimes perch on the sills of empty windows and hoot.

Rubble will block the doorways.

Rain and sunlight will ruin the valuable cedar wood that the Assyrians used to build their buildings.

15The people of Nineveh used to be proud.

They thought that no other country could conquer them.

They said to each other,

“Our city is the greatest city!

No other city is as great as ours!”

But an enemy army will completely destroy Nineveh.

It will become a place where wild animals make their dens.

People who go by that area will often make hissing sounds

and shake their fists to show how much they hated that city.

Chapter 3

1The people who live in the city of Jerusalem have rebelled against Yahweh.

They have committed terrible sins, and this has made them unacceptable to Yahweh.

They have treated others violently.

As a result, terrible things are going to happen to them!

2The people of Jerusalem have not paid attention to the prophets whom Yahweh has sent to correct them.

The people in Jerusalem do not believe in Yahweh, their God, and they do not worship him.

3The leaders of the city treat its people violently,

like lions that roar as they attack their prey.

Their judges are greedy. They are like wolves that have not eaten all day and so devour an entire animal that they kill.

4The prophets in Jerusalem say what they think people want to hear.

They do not honestly give the people messages from Yahweh.

The priests in Jerusalem do things that the law of Moses forbids.

As a result, they have made the temple there unholy.

5But Yahweh is still in the city, and he always does what is right.

He treats people justly, day after day, without fail.

Still, wicked people are not ashamed {when they do what is wrong}.

6So Yahweh says this:

“I have destroyed many nations.

I have destroyed their strong city walls and towers.

I have destroyed the streets in those cities. No one walks on them anymore.

Those cities are in ruins. All the people who used to live in them are now dead.

7I said to myself,

‘The people of Jerusalem will certainly honor me

and allow me to correct them.

If they do that, I will not destroy their city. I will not do all the things that I said I would do to them.’

But even though the people of Jerusalem knew that I had punished other nations,

they eagerly did even more wrong things.”

8So this is what Yahweh declares:

“You can confidently expect that an enemy army is going to conquer you and take away your possessions.

I have decided to judge all of the people groups on the earth at the same time.

I am going to punish them severely because I am very angry with them for being so wicked.

Because I am very angry that people have worshiped false gods, I am going to destroy wicked people all over the world.

9But after that, I will make the people groups

do what is right and say what is right.

That way all of them will worship me, Yahweh.

I will be the only God whom any of them worship.

10Enemy armies will take some of the people who worship me away to other countries.

They will take them as far away as the place where the Nile River begins.

But even from that far away,

my people will come back to Jerusalem, bringing offerings to me.

11When I restore you, you will no longer feel shame

for disobeying me and doing many wrong things.

{Many of you boasted about how great you thought you were.

But I will punish those people,

and then you will always come humbly to worship me in my temple.

12Then the people who live in Jerusalem will be poor, but they will be humble.

They will depend on me, Yahweh, to help them.

13Then the people of Israel who survive will not do wicked things.

They will not tell lies or say things to deceive others.

They will not be afraid that an enemy army will conquer them,

so they will be able to eat and sleep peacefully."

14You Israelites who live in Judah

should sing and shout loudly!

You people who live in Jerusalem should celebrate because you are feeling very happy!

15{You should celebrate because} Yahweh is not going to punish you any more.

He is going to keep enemy armies far away from you!

Yahweh himself, who is the true king of you Israelites, is going to live among you.

You will never be afraid again that others will harm you.

16At that time, prophets will say to the people who live in Jerusalem,

"You people who live on Mount Zion should not be afraid!

No, you should not become discouraged.

17Yahweh your God lives among you!

He is mighty, and he will protect you.

He will be very happy about you.

He will not say anything harsh to you, and you will know how much he loves you.

He will sing loudly to rejoice about you."

18Yahweh says, "Enemy armies took some of you Judeans away from your homeland.

Those people became very sad because they could no longer gather with others to worship me.

They felt shame because of what had happened to them.

But I am going to bring them back to Judah.

19You can be certain that I will severely punish all those who oppressed you.

When I do that, I will rescue those who had to make a long journey to go and live in other countries.

They felt shame when they had to do that.

But now I will make the people of those countries praise and honor them.

20When I act to help you, I will gather you together and bring you back home to Israel.

Then I will cause all the people groups in the world to praise and honor you greatly.

You will be able to see that I am making you rich again.”

This is what Yahweh has promised!

Haggai

Chapter 1

1The prophet Haggai received a message from Yahweh in the second year after Darius had become king of Persia. Haggai received this message on the first day of the sixth month of that year. He told it to the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel. Haggai also told the message to the high priest, Joshua the son of Jehozadak. He said, **2**"Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, says this: 'The people {of Judah} are saying that it is not yet the right time for them to rebuild my temple.'" **3**Yahweh then told the prophet Haggai to tell the people this: **4**"It is not right for you to live in comfortable houses while you have still not repaired Yahweh's temple! **5**So this is what Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, is telling you: 'Think about what you are doing!

6You are planting many seeds, but you are not harvesting many crops.

You eat food, but you never get enough to eat.

You drink wine, but you never get enough to satisfy you.

You still have clothes to wear, but they are so worn-out that they no longer keep you warm.

You earn money, but it is not enough to pay your expenses.' **7**So this is what Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, is telling you: 'Think about what you should do differently! **8**Go up into the hills and cut down trees! Bring the timber from them here to Jerusalem and rebuild my temple! This will honor me, and I will be proud of my temple again.' That is what Yahweh is telling you. **9**Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, is also telling you, 'There is a reason why you have not grown many crops even though you have planted many seeds. The reason is that I kept the crops from growing. I did that because you have built comfortable homes for yourselves, but you have not repaired my temple. **10**Because you were not repairing my temple, I kept the crops from growing by making it so dry that no rain fell from the sky and there was not even any moisture on the ground in the mornings. **11**I have kept the plants from growing in the fields and on the mountains. I have kept your wheat and barley from growing. I have kept your vines from producing grapes. I have kept your olive trees from producing olives. Even though you worked very hard, you were not able to grow enough food. As a result, both people and animals have not had enough to eat.'" **12**{The governor of Judah,} Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, knew that Yahweh their God had told the prophet Haggai to speak this message. The high priest, Joshua the son of Jehozadak, also knew this. The rest of the people who had returned to Judah from exile in Babylon also knew this. And they all respected Yahweh. So they all obeyed the message that Yahweh their God had spoken. **13**{Yahweh was pleased that the people had obeyed him. So} Yahweh gave Haggai, his messenger, another message to speak to the people. Haggai said, "Yahweh is telling you, 'I am with you!'" **14**This message from Yahweh made the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, want to rebuild the temple. It also made the high priest, Joshua the son of Jehozadak, want to rebuild the temple. It also made the rest of the people want to rebuild the temple. So they all gathered together and started rebuilding the temple of Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, their God. **15**They started the work on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month of the second year that Darius was king of Persia.

Chapter 2

1Yahweh gave another message to the prophet Haggai on the twenty-first day of the seventh month {of Darius' second year as king of Persia}. Yahweh told Haggai, **2**"I want you to ask a question to the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and to the high priest, Joshua the son of Jehozadak, and to the rest of the people. Ask them, **3**'Is there still anyone among you who remembers how glorious the temple used to look? If so, do you

think that the temple looks glorious now? You must agree that it does not look very glorious at all.'" **4**{But after Haggai had asked those questions, he said,} "Yahweh is telling you, Zerubbabel, "Now do not be discouraged!' Yahweh is also telling you high priest, Joshua the son of Jehozadak, and all the Jewish people, 'Do not be discouraged!' Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, is telling you, 'Repair the temple, because I am with you {to help you}! **5**That is what I promised your ancestors when I brought them out of slavery in Egypt and made a covenant with them. {And I am still keeping that promise now, since} my Spirit is living among you. So do not be afraid {of the people who are trying to keep you from rebuilding my temple}!' **6**Do not be afraid, because Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, is telling you, 'Soon it will be as if I am shaking the sky and the earth, the sea and the land. **7**It will seem that way because I will be making the other nations respect you. Then those people will bring their treasures to this temple, and I will make it very glorious again.' That is what Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, is telling you. **8**Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, says, "The silver and gold that the people of other nations have really belong to me. **9**Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, says, 'The temple will be even more glorious in the future than it was in the past.' Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, also says, 'I will protect the temple from people who would want to destroy it.'" **10**Yahweh spoke another message to the prophet Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month of Darius' second year as king of Persia. Yahweh told Haggai, **11**"This is what I, Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, am telling you to do. Ask the priests a question about what Moses directed in his instructions. Say, **12**'Suppose a priest takes {from the altar} some meat that a person has offered to Yahweh. And suppose the priest carries the meat within his robe. If his robe touches some bread or stew or wine or olive oil or any other food, does that food become like food that someone has offered to Yahweh?'" When Haggai asked the priests this question, they replied, "No, it does not." **13**Then Haggai asked the priests this question: "Suppose someone becomes unclean by touching a dead body. If this unclean person then touches any food, does that food also become unclean?" The priests replied, "Yes, that food does become unclean." **14**Then Haggai said, "Yahweh is telling you this: 'I consider you Jewish people to be unclean as well! And since you are unclean, the crops that you grow and the animals that you raise are also unclean. And so you cannot offer those unclean crops or the unclean meat from those animals on the altar at the temple. **15**So now think about what has been happening to you during this whole time that you have not been rebuilding my temple. **16**During that time, when you thought you could take 20 measures of grain from a heap, you found that there were only 10 measures in the heap. When you thought you could draw 50 measures of wine out of a wine vat, you found that there were only 20 measures in the vat. **17**I caused blight, mildew, and hail to destroy all the crops that you worked so hard to raise. Even so, you did not do what I wanted you to do and rebuild my temple.' This is what Yahweh is saying to you. **18**Think about what has been happening to you during the whole time between when you laid the foundation of my temple {when you first returned from exile} until this day, the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. Yes, think about that! **19**You have no grain left in your barns. Your grapevines have not been producing grapes. Your fig trees have not been producing figs. Your pomegranate trees have not been producing pomegranates. Your olive trees have not been producing olives. But from now on, I will bless you {with an abundance of crops}!'" **20**Yahweh then gave a second message to Haggai on that same day. He said, **21**"Tell Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, this for me: 'It is going to be as if I am shaking the sky and the earth. **22**It will seem that way because I am going to stop kingdoms from ruling over other kingdoms. I am going to make strong nations weak. I am going to do this by making the nations fight wars against each other. When they do, they will completely destroy one another's armies.' **23**Tell Zerubbabel for me, Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, 'After I destroy the armies of the other kingdoms, I am going to make you powerful, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, my servant.' Tell him for me, Yahweh, 'Just as a king seals his orders with a signet ring, so I will use you to accomplish my purposes.' Tell him for me, Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, 'I am going to do this because I have chosen you!'"

Malachi

Chapter 1

1This is a serious message from Yahweh. Yahweh gave it to Malachi to tell to the Israelite people.

2Yahweh says to the Israelites, “I have shown that I love you.” They may wonder what I mean and ask, “How have you shown love to us?” Yahweh would reply, “Esau and Jacob were brothers. I chose to love Jacob and his descendants. **3**But I did not favor Esau and his descendants. I turned Esau’s hill country into empty land. I let wild dogs live in the places where Esau’s people used to live.” **4**The people of Edom, who are Esau’s descendants, might say, “Enemies have destroyed our towns, but we will rebuild them.” But Yahweh, who commands the heavenly armies, says, “Even if they rebuild, I will tear down what they build. People will call Edom a land of evil people. They will say that Yahweh will always be angry with the people of Edom. **5**You Israelites will see this happen. Then you will say, ‘Even outside the land of Israel, people know that Yahweh is great!’”

6Yahweh, who commands the heavenly armies, says, “A son honors his father, and a servant respects his master. Since I am like a father to you, you should honor me, but you do not. Since I am your master, you should respect me, but you do not. I am saying this to you priests who do not respect me. You may wonder what I mean and ask, ‘How have we shown disrespect to you?’ **7**You show disrespect by offering unacceptable sacrifices on my altar. You may wonder what I mean and ask, ‘How have we offered unacceptable sacrifices?’ I will tell you. You show disrespect by thinking that you can treat my altar with contempt. **8**You bring blind animals to sacrifice to me. That is wrong. You bring animals that cannot walk or are sick. That is also wrong. If you gave animals like that to your governor, he would not be pleased with you, and he would not accept them.” This is what Yahweh, who commands the heavenly armies, says. **9**“But you are asking me, God, to be kind to you, even though you have done these wrong things. Do not think that I will accept you!” This is what Yahweh, who commands the heavenly armies, says. **10**Yahweh. who commands the heavenly armies, says, “I wish one of you would close the temple doors. Then you would not light useless fires on my altar. I am not happy with you. I will not accept any offerings from you. **11**People all over the world will respect me. In every place, people will burn incense to honor me and bring me pure offerings, because everyone will know how great I am.” This is what Yahweh, who commands the heavenly armies, says. **12**“But you dishonor me. You say that my altar is not important, and you do not value the food you get from it. **13**You even say, ‘We are tired of doing this work!’ You show that you do not care about it.” This is what Yahweh, who commands the heavenly armies, says. “You bring me animals that you stole, cannot walk, or are sick. If you bring these as offerings, do not think that I will accept them from you!” says Yahweh. **14**“I will punish anyone who tries to cheat me. If someone promises to give me a good male animal from his flock but then gives me one that is not healthy, I will punish that person. After all, I am the great King. I am Yahweh, who commands the heavenly armies, and people all over the world respect me.”

Chapter 2

1Yahweh says, “Now, priests, this command is for you. **2**If you do not obey me and make sure that you honor me, I will curse you,” says Yahweh, who commands the heavenly armies. “I will even curse the good things I have given you. In fact, I have already started to curse them, because you are not taking seriously what I have told you to do. **3**I am ready to punish you by keeping you from having good harvests. You will be disgraced, as if I had spread animal waste on your faces, the waste from the animals you sacrifice at festivals. People will consider you as worthless as that waste! **4**Then you will know that I gave you this command so that my agreement with the priests, the descendants of Levi, will continue.” This is what Yahweh, who commands the heavenly armies, says. **5**“I made a peaceful and life-giving agreement with them because they revered me, and they revered me greatly. **6**They taught the people what was true, and they did not say things that were wrong. They lived peacefully and honestly, the way

I wanted them to, and they helped many people stop doing bad things. **7**After all, a priest should teach people how to know God better. People should learn from what the priest says, because he brings messages from me, Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies. **8**But you priests have stopped living the way I want. Your teaching has caused many people to do wrong things. You have failed to keep the agreement I made with the Levite priests," says Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies. **9**"So I have made people disrespect you and I have humiliated you before all the people. This is because you have not lived the way I want people to live. You have also not treated everyone fairly when you have applied my laws."

10In a sense, we all have the same father, since the same God created each of us. So we should not break our promises to each other. If we do, we dishonor the agreement God made with our ancestors. **11**The people of Judah have not been faithful to God. They have done terrible things in Israel and Jerusalem. They have dishonored the temple that Yahweh loves. They are worshiping foreign gods instead of Yahweh. **12**I hope Yahweh will remove from among the people of Israel every single person who does this, even if they bring offerings to Yahweh, who is the commander of the heavenly armies. **13**This is another thing you do: When you come to offer sacrifices at Yahweh's altar, you weep bitterly. You cry and groan because Yahweh no longer accepts your offerings. **14**You may wonder what I mean and ask, "Why does he not accept them?" It is because Yahweh knows that you have not been faithful to the wife you married as a young man. You did this even though she was your partner and you promised to be her husband. **15**God has united husbands and wives so that they are one, and he has made their marriage a spiritual relationship. God made them one because he wants them to have children who are faithful to him. So be careful. Do not break your promise to the wife you married when you were a young man. **16**Yahweh, the God of Israel, says, "I hate divorce. I hate it when one of you does such a cruel thing to your wife. So be careful. Do not break your promise to be faithful to your wife." This is what Yahweh, who commands the heavenly armies, says.

17Yahweh is tired of hearing what you have been saying. You may wonder what I mean and ask, "How have we made him tired?" You have made him tired by saying, "Yahweh thinks that people who do evil things are actually good. He is happy with them." Yahweh is also tired of hearing you say, "God is not being fair!"

Chapter 3

1Yahweh, who commands the heavenly armies, says, "Pay attention! I am about to send my messenger. He will get things ready for me to come. Then I, the Lord you are looking for, will suddenly come to my temple. You want someone to bring you a message about my agreement with you, and I am going to send someone to do that. **2**But when he does come, no one will be able to keep living the way they were living before. When he appears, he will not tell anyone that he is innocent. But he will purify people {from sin}, just as fire makes metal pure and soap makes clothes clean. **3**He will help people stop sinning, just as a metalworker sits patiently near silver he has melted and keeps removing impurities from it. He will purify the descendants of Levi, just as a metalworker purifies gold and silver. Then they will bring proper offerings to Yahweh. **4**After that, Yahweh will accept the offerings that the people of Judah and Jerusalem bring him, just as he did in ancient times." **5**Yahweh, who commands the armies of heaven, says, "I will come to judge you. I will immediately declare people guilty and punish them if they have practiced witchcraft, committed adultery, made false promises, not paid fair wages to their workers, or taken advantage of widows and orphans and foreigners. People have done those things because they did not think I would punish them{, but I will}.

6I will do this because I am Yahweh, and I {swore to Abraham that I would bless his descendants}. When I make a promise, I keep it. That is why you descendants of Jacob are still living here in Judea, even though you are disobeying me. **7**Ever since the time of your ancestors, you have disobeyed my laws. You have completely ignored them. Now come back to me, and I will come back to you," says Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies. "You may wonder what I mean and ask, 'How can we come back to you?' **8**You might think that no one would even try to steal from God. But you are stealing from me! You may wonder what I mean and ask, 'How are we stealing from you?' You are stealing from me by not giving me the tithes and offerings that you should. **9**Because you are robbing me in this way, I have put a curse on all of you Israelites. **10**Bring all the tithes to the room in the temple where the priests keep contributions. Make sure there is food for the priests who serve in my temple. Try this and

see what I do in response," says Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies. "If you do this, then I will bless you so much that it will be as if I had opened windows in the sky and poured out blessings to you. You will not have enough room to store all of the crops that grow in your fields. **11**I will prevent pests from eating your crops. Your grapevines will produce plenty of grapes," says Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies. **12**"Then people from all nations will say that God has blessed you. They will say that because your land will be a delightful place," says Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies.

13Yahweh says, "You have said terrible things about me. You may wonder what I mean and ask, 'What have we said about you?' **14**You have said, 'It is useless to serve God. We have not gained anything by obeying his commands or by showing Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, that we are sorry for our sins. **15**We have come to think that proud people become prosperous. Even when people do bad things, they succeed. They challenge God by doing wicked things, but God does not punish them.'"

16Then those who honored Yahweh all spoke with one another. Yahweh listened carefully to what they said. Those who honored Yahweh and respected him all wrote their names down in a book as he watched. **17**Then Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, said, "These people especially will belong to me. On the day when I judge people, I will spare them from punishment. I will treat them kindly, just as parents treat kindly the children who obey them. **18**Then once more you will clearly see that righteous people do prosper while wicked people do not. There is that difference between those who obey God and those who disobey him."

Chapter 4

1Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, says, "Pay attention! The time is coming when I am going to judge people. People will feel their guilt intensely, as if they were standing in front of a hot furnace. At that time, I will destroy all proud and wicked people as if they were straw burning in a fire. I will destroy them completely, just as a fire burns up plants from top to bottom. **2**But those of you who honor me will experience my power saving you as if the sun were rising and bringing you warmth and light. By my power, I will heal you. You will be as happy as calves are when they leave their stalls to go and play out in the open fields. **3**At the time when I do this, you will completely defeat every wicked person. It will be as if you are stomping them down with your feet." This is what Yahweh, who commands the heavenly armies, says. **4**"Remember to obey the laws that I gave to my servant Moses on Mount Sinai. Obey all the rules and regulations that I gave him for all the Israelite people to obey. **5**Listen carefully! I will send the prophet Elijah to you before the grand and frightening day comes when I, Yahweh, will judge everyone. **6**Because of his message, parents and children will love each other again. I am going to make this happen so that I will not have to come and curse your country."

Matthew

Chapter 1

1This is a record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah. He is a descendant of {King} David, who was a descendant of Abraham{, the ancestor of all Jewish people}.

2Abraham was the father of Isaac. Isaac was the father of Jacob. Jacob was the father of Judah and Judah's {older and younger} brothers. **3**Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah. Their mother was Tamar. Perez was the father of Hezrom. Hezrom was the father of Aram. **4**Aram was the father of Amminadab. Amminadab was the father of Nahshon. Nahshon was the father of Salmon. **5**Salmon was the father of Boaz. Boaz's mother was Rahab. Boaz was the father of Obed. Obed's mother was Ruth. Obed was the father of Jesse. **6**Jesse was the father of King David.

David was the father of Solomon. Solomon's mother was {Bathsheba, who had been} Uriah's wife. **7**Solomon was the father of Rehoboam. Rehoboam was the father of Abijah. Abijah was the father of Asaph. **8**Asaph was the father of Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat was the father of Joram. Joram was an ancestor of Ozias. **9**Ozias was the father of Jotham. Jotham was the father of Ahaz. Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah. **10**Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh. Manasseh was the father of Amos. Amos was the father of Josiah. **11**Josiah 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 Babylonian army took the Israelites as} captives to the country of Babylon, Jechoniah became the father of Salathiel. Salathiel was the father of Zerubbabel. **13**Zerubbabel was the father of Abiud. Abiud was the father of Eliakim. Eliakim was the father of Azor. **14**Azor was the father of Zadok. Zadok was the father of Achim. Achim was the father of Eliud. **15**Eliud was the father of Eleazar. Eleazar was the father of Matthan. Matthan was the father of Jacob. **16**Jacob was the father of Joseph. Joseph was Mary's husband. Mary was the mother of Jesus. Jesus is the one whom we call the Messiah.

17So then, there are 14 ancestors when we count from Abraham to David. There are 14 ancestors when we count from David until when {the Babylonian army took the Israelites as} captives to the country of Babylon. There are 14 ancestors when we count from that time to the Messiah.

18{I will tell you} what happened when the mother of Jesus the Messiah gave birth to him. His mother Mary was about to marry {a man named} Joseph, and they had not yet had sex. Despite that, Joseph discovered that Mary was pregnant with a baby (whom the Holy Spirit had given to her). **19**Joseph, who was about to marry her, {thought that Mary had sex with another man.} Joseph usually did what was right, and he also did not want to shame Mary. So, he decided to say in private that he would not marry her. **20**While Joseph was deciding what to do, he saw an angel from the Lord while he was sleeping! The angel said to him, "Joseph, King David's descendant, do not be reluctant to marry Mary. {I say that} because it was the Holy Spirit who caused her to become pregnant. **21**She will have a male child. You should name him 'Jesus,' {which means 'the Lord rescues'}. {You should name him that} because he will rescue his people from the sins that they have committed."

22When all those things happened, what the Lord said by speaking through the prophet {Isaiah} came true. {Isaiah} said, **23**"A young woman who has never had sex will become pregnant! She will give birth to a male child. People will name him 'Immanuel.'"

The name Immanuel means, “God is with us.” **24**After Joseph woke up, he married Mary, which is what the angel from the Lord had told him to do. **25**However, he did not have sex with her before she gave birth to a male child. Joseph named the child Jesus.

Chapter 2

1{Mary} gave birth to Jesus in the town of Bethlehem in the region of Judea. During that time, Herod was the king there. {Some time after Mary gave birth to Jesus,} some scholars who studied the stars traveled from eastern countries to the city of Jerusalem! **2**They were asking people, “Where is the child who will be the king over the Jewish people? We saw a star appear in the sky {that indicated that his mother had given birth to} him. We traveled here so that we can worship him.”

3When King Herod learned {what these men were asking}, he was upset. Many people in the city of Jerusalem were also upset. **4**So, King Herod summoned all the Jewish ruling priests and teachers of the Jewish law. He asked them about where the Messiah’s mother would give birth to him.

5They answered him, “{His mother will give birth to him} in the town of Bethlehem in the region of Judea. {We know that} because of what the prophet {Micah} wrote.

6‘You who live in the town of Bethlehem in the land of Judah,

your town is one of the important towns in Judah.

{That is} because someone from your town will become a leader.

That person will rule God’s people, the Israelites.’”

7After that, King Herod summoned the scholars who studied the stars {to talk with him} privately. He asked them about exactly when they first saw the {special} star. **8**After that, he told them, “Go to the town of Bethlehem and look for the child. When you are sure that you know who he is, {come back and} tell me {who he is}. That way, I too can go and worship him.” Then he sent them away.

9The scholars listened to the king, and then they traveled {to Bethlehem}. The star which they saw when it appeared in the sky guided them! It moved {in the sky} until it was directly above the place where the child{, Jesus,} was living. **10**When they saw how the star moved and then stopped, they were extremely happy. **11**They went into the house {above which the star had stopped}. There, they saw the child {Jesus} and his mother Mary. They bowed down and worshiped him. Then, they unpacked the valuable things that they had brought with them. They gave Jesus gold, incense, and valuable tree resin. **12**After that, God used a dream to tell them not to go back to King Herod. So, they went home on a different road {than the one on which they had come}.

13After the scholars who studied the stars went home, Joseph saw an angel from the Lord while he was sleeping! The angel told him, “King Herod wants to find the child so that he can kill him. So, when you wake up, escape to the land of Egypt with the child and his mother{, your wife}. Stay there until I tell you {that you can return home}.”

14Then Joseph woke up. During that night, he left for the land of Egypt with the child and the child’s mother{, his wife}. **15**They lived in the land of Egypt while King Herod ruled. So, what the Lord said by speaking through the prophet {Hosea} came true:

“I have told my son to leave Egypt.”

16When {the scholars who studied the stars did not come back to King Herod}, he realized that they had fooled him. He became furious. He had some of his soldiers go to the city of Bethlehem and the areas around it and kill every male child who was two years old or younger. {He picked those ages} because of what the scholars who studied the stars told him about the exact time {when they first saw the star}. **17**At that time, what God said by speaking through the prophet Jeremiah came true:

18"People heard women in the town of Ramah lamenting loudly.

It was the descendants of Rachel mourning for their children.

Because their children were dead, they would not stop mourning."

19{During this time, Joseph and his family were living} in the land of Egypt. After Herod died, Joseph saw an angel from the Lord while he was sleeping! **20**The angel told him, "Everyone who wanted to kill the child has died. So, when you wake up, return to the country of Israel with the child and his mother{, your wife}." **21**Then Joseph woke up. He went back to the country of Israel with the child and the child's mother{, his wife}.

22However, Joseph heard that Archelaus had succeeded his father, King Herod, as king over the region of Judea. So, he was afraid to live there. Further, while Joseph was sleeping, God instructed him {to live somewhere else}. So, Joseph decided to live in the region of Galilee. **23**When he and his family arrived {in Galilee}, they lived in the town of Nazareth. In that way, what God said by speaking through the prophets came true: "People will say that the Messiah is from Nazareth."

Chapter 3

1While Jesus was living in Galilee, a man whom people called John the Baptizer went to a desolate area in the region of Judea. He proclaimed, **2**"Stop doing what is wrong! {You should do that} because God is about to establish his heavenly kingdom here." **3**That man is the one about whom the Lord said, by speaking through the prophet Isaiah,

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

'Prepare yourselves to receive the Lord!

Make yourselves ready for when he comes!'"

4As for this man John, he wore rough clothes that he made out of camel's hair. He fastened around his waist a belt that he made from animal skin. He ate grasshoppers and honey that he found in that desolate area. **5**At that time, people who lived in the city of Jerusalem, many people who lived in the region of Judea, and many people who lived near the Jordan River often went to listen to John. **6**Many of these people agreed that they had sinned. Then, John baptized them in the Jordan River.

7In fact, many men from the Pharisee sect and from the Sadducee sect went to John so that he would baptize them. When he saw them, he declared to them, "You people are sneaky and dangerous like poisonous snakes! You think that if I baptize you, God will spare you when he punishes sinners. {But I did not say that!} **8**You need to do the things that show that you have truly rejected your previous sinful way of living! **9**Do not think to yourselves, '{Certainly God will not punish us, because} we are descendants of Abraham!' {That does not impress God.} Let me assure you, God could turn these stones into descendants of Abraham! **10**You are like fruit trees that do not produce good fruit. God is like a man who is positioning the head of his axe at the base of those trees, ready to chop them down and throw them into the fire. God is ready to punish you like that if you continue sinning.

11I use water to baptize you so that you stop doing what is wrong. However, soon you will see someone else who is more powerful than I am. It is not appropriate for me to be even his servant. He will give you the Holy Spirit and make you pure. **12**{The Messiah is ready to do that, just like} a farmer who has his winnowing fork ready to use. A farmer separates all the good grain from the useless chaff. He stores the grain safely in his barn, but he burns the chaff until it is all gone. {Much like that farmer, the Messiah will preserve the people who obey God, and he will punish the people who disobey God.}"

13After {John began preaching and baptizing people}, Jesus traveled from the region of Galilee to where John was
near the Jordan River. He wanted John to baptize him. **14**However, John did not want to baptize him. He said to
Jesus, “You should not want me to baptize you. Actually, I need you to baptize me!”

15Jesus answered him, “Please {baptize me} at this time. When you do, you and I will be acting appropriately by
doing what God requires.” After {Jesus said that,} John agreed {to baptize} him.

16Right after John baptized him, Jesus walked out of the River Jordan. Then, God allowed him to see into heaven! He
saw that the Holy Spirit, who looked like a small bird, was descending {from heaven} and landing on him. **17**Then
God spoke from heaven! He declared, “This man is my Son, the one whom I love dearly. What he does pleases me.”

Chapter 4

1After that, the Holy Spirit took Jesus into a desolate area. That way, the ruling evil spirit could try to make him sin.
2He did not eat any food for 40 days. After that, he was hungry. **3**Then the devil arrived. He wanted to make Jesus
sin. He said to Jesus, “Show me that you really are God’s Son. Command these stones to become loaves of bread
{for you to eat}.”

4Jesus responded, “{I will not do that}, because Moses wrote in the Scriptures, ‘People need more than food to stay
alive. {They also need to do} everything that God tells {them to do}.’”

5After that, the ruling evil spirit transported Jesus to {Jerusalem,} the sacred city. He made him stand on the
highest part of the temple. **6**Then, he said to Jesus, “Show me that you really are God’s Son. Jump from here! {You
will not hurt yourself,} because it says in the Scriptures,

‘God will tell his angels {to protect} you.

They will carry you,

and you will not hurt yourself at all.’”

7Jesus responded, “Again, {I will not do that}, because Moses wrote in the Scriptures, ‘Do not provoke the Lord your
God to see what he will do.’”

8Then, the devil transported Jesus to the top of a very tall mountain. {From there,} he showed Jesus all the nations
in the world. {He showed Jesus} how rich and powerful they were. **9**He told Jesus, “Bow down and worship me.
Then, I will make you the ruler of all these countries.”

10After that, Jesus responded, “Leave me, Satan! {I will not worship you,} because Moses wrote in the Scriptures,
‘You must only worship the Lord your God. He is the only one you may honor {as God}.’”

11After {Jesus said that,} the ruling evil spirit went away. Then, angels arrived and took care of Jesus!

12Soon afterward, Jesus learned that {King Herod Antipas} had put John {the Baptizer} in prison. So, Jesus went
back to the region of Galilee. **13**After he visited the town of Nazareth, he went to live in the town of Capernaum.
Capernaum is next to the Sea of Galilee in the region that used to belong to the tribe of Zebulun and the tribe of
Naphtali. **14**So, what God said by speaking through the prophet Isaiah came true:

15“{I am speaking about people in} the regions that belong to the tribe of Zebulun and to the tribe of Naphtali.

{These regions are} by the Sea {of Galilee}, on the other side of the Jordan River.

{We call these regions} Galilee, where many non-Jewish people live.

16

The people {who live in those regions} sin and despair. They are like people who sit in dark places.

However, God will rescue them. They will be like people who see a bright light.

Again, {the people in those regions} suffer and die. They are like people who sit in a dangerous place without any light.

However, God will save them. It will be as if a light shines on them."

17After {he went to live in the town of Capernaum}, Jesus started proclaiming, "Stop doing what is wrong! {You should do that} because God is about to establish his heavenly kingdom here."

18One day, Jesus was walking next to the Sea of Galilee. He saw two men: Simon, who also had the name Peter, and Simon's {younger} brother Andrew. They earned money by catching and selling fish. {When Jesus saw them,} they were using nets to try to catch fish. **19**Jesus commanded them, "Come with me and be my apprentices. I will teach you how to gather people {to be my apprentices}, just as you have been gathering fish." **20**As soon as {Jesus said this}, they stopped working. They went with him and were his apprentices. **21**Jesus kept walking {next to the sea}. Then, he saw two more men: James, the son of Zebedee, and James' {younger brother} John. {When Jesus saw them,} they were preparing their fishing tools in a boat with their father, Zebedee. Jesus commanded them, {"Come with me and be my apprentices."} **22**As soon as {they heard what Jesus said,} they got out of the boat and left their father. They went with Jesus and were his apprentices.

23Jesus visited all the towns in the region of Galilee. He instructed people {when they gathered} in the Jewish meeting places. He proclaimed the good news about God's kingdom. He cured many Jewish people who were sick in any way. **24**Many people who lived in the region of Syria heard about him. They took to him many people who were suffering, people who were sick or hurting, people with demons, and people who could not move or who had seizures. Jesus healed them. **25**Large groups of people went wherever Jesus went. These people came from the region of Galilee, from the region of the Ten Towns, from the city of Jerusalem, from the region of Judea, and from the east side of the Jordan River.

Chapter 5

1When Jesus saw these large groups of people, he went up on a hill. He sat down there, {ready to teach,} and his apprentices gathered around him {to listen}. **2**Then he began to instruct them. He said,

3"It is very good for those who do not have spiritual strength.

{That is} because they are part of God's heavenly kingdom.

4It is very good for those who grieve.

{That is} because God will encourage them.

5It is very good for those who are gentle.

{That is} because God will give them the world {when he renews it}.

6It is very good for those who greatly desire to do what is right.

{That is} because God will enable them to do what they desire to do.

7It is very good for those who are merciful {to other people}.

{That is} because God will be merciful to them.

8It is very good for those who desire what is good.

{That is} because they will be with God.

9It is very good for those who enable people to be peaceful {with each other}.

{That is} because God will regard them as his own children.

10It is very good for those whom others mistreat because they do what is right.

{That is} because they are part of God's heavenly kingdom.

11It is very good for you whenever {people act against you} because you are my apprentices. They may shame you, mistreat you, and tell many hurtful lies about you. **12**{When people treat you like that}, God is ready to reward you greatly from heaven. So, you should rejoice very much! Further, people mistreated the Jewish prophets long ago just as people mistreat you now.

13You are like salt since you make people in this world better, just as salt seasons food. However, if salt were to stop seasoning food well, no one could make it season food well again. No one can use it for anything. So, people throw it away, and others walk on it. {In the same way, I will punish you if you do not make this world better.}

14You are like a light that illuminates everyone in this world {since you tell people about me}. {You are like} a town on a hill that everyone can see {since everyone notices the good things that you do}. **15**Further, when people light a lamp, they do not cover it with a basket. Instead, they put it on a lampstand. That way, it illuminates everyone in the house. **16**Just as {the light from a lamp illuminates everyone in a house}, so you should publicly do what is right. That way, people will notice the good things that you do. Then, they will praise God, your Father, who rules from heaven.

17You should not conclude that I am here to abolish any parts of the Scriptures. I am not here to abolish them. Rather, I am here so that they come true. **18**Every part of the Scriptures will be authoritative as long as what God has created continues to exist. {Further, the Scriptures will be authoritative} until everything {that their authors wrote about} happens. What I have said is true. **19**So then, suppose that someone disregards even one of the most insignificant laws. Also, suppose that this person teaches other people to do the same thing. This person will be insignificant in God's heavenly kingdom. In contrast, suppose that someone obeys the laws and teaches other people to do the same thing. This person will be very important in God's heavenly kingdom. **20**Here is what I mean: You need to do what is right even more than the teachers of the Jewish law and the Pharisees do. That is the only way to participate in God's heavenly kingdom.

21You know that God said to our ancestors, 'You must not murder anyone. People who murder someone deserve to have a judge decide they are guilty and punish them.' **22**Now here is what I want to tell you: people who become angry with fellow believers deserve to have a judge decide they are guilty and punish them. People who insult fellow believers deserve to have the Jewish council decide they are guilty and punish them. People who say {that fellow believers are} foolish deserve to have God punish them in hell. **23**So then, suppose that you are standing near the altar {in the temple} to present something {to God}. Then, you recall that you have offended a fellow believer. **24**You should set down near the altar what you are presenting {to God} and depart {to visit that fellow believer}. You should resolve what happened to offend that fellow believer. Then, you can go back {to the altar} and present your gift {to God}. **25**Suppose that someone intends to say to a judge that you did something wrong. You should try to resolve what happened before that person can speak to the judge. That way, the person does not bring you to the judge, who would command one of the officials to put you in jail. **26**{If you go to jail,} you will never get out of there until you are able to pay every bit of what the judge says you owe. What I have said is true.

27You know that God said, 'Married people must remain sexually faithful to their spouses.' **28**Now here is what I want to tell you: suppose that a man stares at a woman who is not his wife so that he can think about having sex with her. Simply because of what he desires, he has been sexually unfaithful to his wife. **29**Suppose that you sinned because you looked at something. You should never do that again, even if you have to remove your eyes to make sure of it! {You should respond that drastically} because it is better for you to have no eyes than to have a complete body but end up in hell. **30**Suppose that you sinned because you touched something. You should never do that

again, even if you have to chop off your hands to make sure of it! {You should respond that drastically} because it is better for you to have no hands than to have a complete body but end up in hell.

31God said, ‘Suppose that a man wants to divorce his wife. He must present her with a document that states that he is divorcing her.’ **32**Now here is what I want to tell you: a man may divorce his wife only if she has had improper sex. When a man divorces his wife for any other reason, he makes her disobey what God commanded about being sexually faithful to one’s spouse. Further, any man who marries a woman whose husband has divorced her also disobeys what God commanded about being sexually faithful to one’s spouse.

33Here are more examples: you know that God said to our ancestors, ‘You must not promise to do anything that you will not do. Rather, you must always do what you promised the Lord {that you would do}.’ **34**Now here is what I want to tell you: you must never have someone or something guarantee what you promise. For example, you must not have heaven guarantee it. That is because heaven is where God rules. **35**You must not have the earth guarantee what you promise. That is because the earth is what God rules over. You must not have the city of Jerusalem guarantee it. That is because Jerusalem is a city that belongs to God, who is a powerful king. **36**You must not have your own head guarantee what you promise. That is because you cannot even control the color of one of your hairs. **37**When you promise something, just say ‘Yes, I will do it,’ or ‘No, I will not do it.’ When you say more to guarantee what you promised, you are doing what Satan wants {you to do}.

38You know that God said, ‘{You must punish people in a way that matches how they hurt others. For example,} consider a person who blinded someone. You should punish that person by blinding him or her too. Consider a person who knocked out someone’s tooth. You should punish that person by knocking out his or her tooth too.’ **39**Now here is what I want to tell you: do not try to stop people who do bad things to you. Rather, suppose that someone {insults you by} hitting you on the right side of your face. You should turn your face so that the person can hit the left side also. **40**Suppose that someone wants to sue you for your shirt. You should give that person your coat as well. **41**Suppose that someone requires you to carry his or her burden for one section of road. You should continue to carry that person’s burden for a second {section of road}. **42**Suppose that someone requests something from you. You should give that person {what they requested}. Suppose that someone wants to receive a loan from you. You should lend money to that person.

43You know that God said, ‘Care for your fellow Jews.’ {Some people add,} ‘Despise those who oppose you.’ **44**Now here is what I want to tell you: you should care for those who oppose you. You should pray for those who mistreat you. **45**God causes the sun to shine on people who are wicked and on people who are good. God makes it rain on people who do what is right and on people who do what is wrong. So, when you {care and pray for people who oppose you}, you are like children of God, your Father, who rules from heaven. **46**Further, if you care for {only} those who care for you, do not expect God to reward you for doing that. Even {unkind} tax collectors care for those who care for them. **47**If you say hello {only} to fellow believers, you are not behaving any differently {than unbelievers do}. Even {unbelieving} non-Jews say hello to their friends. **48**So, you should always do what is right, just as God, your Father, who rules from heaven, always does what is right.

Chapter 6

1When you do what God desires, make sure that you are not doing it so that people praise you for it. When you do what God desires so that others praise you, God your Father, who rules from heaven, will not reward you.

2Whenever some people give money to help poor people, they have someone announce what they are doing by playing a loud instrument in the Jewish meeting places and in the main roads. They pretend to help others, but they just want other people to praise them. God will not reward them any more than that. What I have said is true. So, you should not behave like that. **3**Instead, when you give money to help poor people, you should do it as privately as possible. **4**That way, only God your Father will know that you have given money to help poor people. When he observes you doing that privately, he will reward you.

5Whenever some people pray to God, they enjoy doing so while standing in the Jewish meeting places and on the street corners. They pretend to focus on praying, but they just want other people to recognize them. God will not reward them any more than that. What I have said is true. So, you should not behave like that. **6**In contrast, when you want to pray to God, you should go to a private room in your house and close the door. Then, you can pray to God your Father, who is there with you in private. When he observes you doing that privately, he will reward you.
7Further, as you are praying, do not repeat yourself as non-Jews do. They suppose that their gods will listen to them if they use many words. **8**So then, do not pray to God as they do. In fact, before you ask him {for anything that you need}, God your Father is already aware of what you need.

9Here is how you should pray to God:

‘{I pray to} God our Father, who rules from heaven.

May all people glorify you.

10May you establish your kingdom.

May everyone do what you want

here on earth, just as {they already do} in heaven.

11Please give us the food we need each day.

12We have forgiven people for when they did not treat us rightly.

In the same way, please forgive us for when we do not act rightly.

13Please protect us from everything that tries to make us sin.

Please rescue us when Satan tries to harm us.’

14God your Father, who rules from heaven, will forgive you as long as you forgive the people who sin against you.
15However, God your Father will not forgive you when you sin against him as long as you do not forgive other people.

16Whenever some people do not eat in order to please God, they change how their faces look. They pretend to be sad, but they just want other people to recognize that they are not eating. God will not reward them any more than that. What I have said is true. So, you should not behave like that. **17**In contrast, when you do not eat in order to please God, you should keep yourselves neat and clean. **18**That way, other people do not know that you are not eating. Only God your Father, who is there with you in private, {will know}. When he observes you doing that privately, he will reward you

19You should not collect many valuable things for yourselves in this world. In this world, insects eat clothes, and metal objects corrode. Further, robbers force their way into people’s houses to take their goods. **20**Rather, you should collect many valuable things for yourselves in heaven. In heaven, insects do not eat clothes, and metal objects do not corrode. Further, robbers do not force their way into people’s houses to take their goods. **21**{That is important} because you think and care most about the place where you collect valuable things.

22Your eyes are like a lamp since they enable you to see. If your eyes are working properly, then your whole body will benefit. **23**However, if your eyes are not working properly, then your whole body does not benefit at all. So consider how bad it is when what you see as bright light is actually very dark!

24Servants cannot serve two different masters {at the same time}. {If they tried to do that,} they would hate one of them and love the other one, or they would be loyal to one of them and consider the other one to be unimportant. {In the same way,} you cannot devote your life to serving God if you are also devoting your life to acquiring money and other material possessions.

25So then, here is what I want to tell you: do not worry about whether you will have enough to eat or drink to stay alive. Do not worry about whether you will have enough clothes to wear to stay warm. After all, your life is more important than the food you eat, and your body is more important than the clothes you put on it. **26**Think about the birds {that fly} in the sky. They do not plant seeds, and they do not harvest crops. They do not store crops, but God your Father, who rules from heaven, provides food for them. You are certainly much more important than they are{, so you can be sure that God will give you what you need}. **27**You cannot add even a minute to your life by worrying about it!

28So, you should not worry about whether you will have enough clothes to wear. Observe the way that flowers grow in a field. They do not work {to earn money}, and they do not make their own clothes. **29**However, here is what I want to tell you: King Solomon, who {lived long ago and} wore glorious clothes, never dressed as beautifully as a single flower. **30**God makes plants beautiful, even though they grow for only a short time. Then people {cut them down and} throw them into the fire. {But you are very precious to God.} He will care for you even more than he cares for the plants. You should trust God more than you do! **31**So then, do not worry by asking about whether you have anything to eat or drink, or whether you have clothes to wear. **32**The people who do not know God worry about such things. {However, you should not worry about such things} because God your Father, who rules from heaven, knows that you need them all. **33**You should concentrate primarily on what you can do for God's kingdom and on doing what God considers to be right. When you do those things, {you can trust God} to provide everything you need.

34So then, do not worry about {what will happen} tomorrow. You can worry tomorrow about what will happen during that day. Enough bad things happen each day {that you should not worry about bad things that might happen tomorrow}.

Chapter 7

1Do not harshly criticize {other people}. That way, God will not harshly criticize you. **2**{I say that} because God will harshly criticize you in the same way that you harshly criticize others. In fact, God will treat you in the same way that you treat others. **3**{None of you should concentrate on the small faults of another person. You should concentrate on your own serious faults.} Otherwise, that would be like noticing a speck in the eye of that person while not noticing a huge wooden plank in your own eye. **4**You should not tell another believer, 'Let me help you correct your faults,' while you have not yet dealt with your own faults. **5**If you do that, you are a hypocrite! You should first {stop committing your own sins. That will be like} removing a large plank from your own eye. Then, as a result, you will have the spiritual insight you need to help others get rid of the {smaller faults that are like} little specks in their eyes.

6{Apply this saying to how you live:} do not present sacred things to dogs, and do not put valuable things in front of pigs. {I say that} because the pigs will crush your valuable things, and the dogs will destroy the sacred things and then attack you.

7Keep asking {God for the things you need}, and he will give them to you. Keep seeking {those things from God}, and you will receive them. Ask God to make things possible for you, and he will act on your behalf. **8**{You should do those things} because everyone who keeps asking {God for the things they need} will receive them. Everyone who seeks {those things from God} will receive them. If people ask God to make things possible for them, God will act on their behalf. **9**Suppose one of you had a child who asked you for bread {to eat}. You certainly would not give your child a rock {to eat}! **10**Similarly, suppose that your child asked you for a fish {to eat}. You certainly would not give your child a poisonous snake {to eat}! **11**So, even though you people are sinful, you still know how to give good gifts to your children. Therefore, it is even more certain that God your Father, who rules from heaven, will give good things to those who ask him.

12In conclusion, in whatever way you want others to act toward you, that is the way you should act toward them. Then, you will be doing what it says in all the parts of the Scriptures.

13-14{When you choose how to live, you are like a traveler choosing which path to take.} There is an easy path and a large gate, and many people go that way. However, if you go that way, God will punish you. There is also a hard path and a small gate, and only a few people go that way. You should use that small gate, because that is how you will truly live.

15Watch out for people who lie when they claim to speak messages from God. They may look like they are part of God's people, but really they want to hurt God's people. **16**You can tell what people are really like by the things that they do. So, people are like plants in this way. A bush with thorns does not produce grapes. A thorny plant does not produce figs. **17**Similarly, all healthy fruit trees produce fruit that is good to eat. All unhealthy fruit trees produce fruit that is bad to eat. **18**Healthy fruit trees cannot produce fruit that is bad to eat. Unhealthy fruit trees cannot produce fruit that is good to eat. **19**People chop down every tree that does not produce fruit that is good to eat. Then, they burn those trees {for fuel}. {In the same way, God will punish everyone who does not do what is right.} **20**Therefore, you can tell if a plant is healthy or unhealthy by what kind of fruit it produces. In the same way, you can tell what people are really like by the things that they do.

21Just calling me your Lord is not enough for you to participate in God's heavenly kingdom. Rather, you need to do what God my Father, who rules from heaven, wants {you to do}. **22**On the day when God will judge everyone, many people will tell me, 'Our Lord, we represented you when we proclaimed what God says! We represented you when we drove evil spiritual beings out of people! We represented you when we did many powerful things!' **23**I will then respond to them, 'You were never part of my people. You do what is wrong. Leave me!'

24So, all people who hear my teachings and obey them are acting as wise people who construct their homes on top of solid rock. **25**There may be heavy rain, and there may be floods, and there may be strong winds that buffet those homes. However, they will not collapse. That is because the wise people constructed them on top of solid rock. **26**However, all people who hear my teachings and do not obey them are like foolish people who construct their homes on top of shifting sand. **27**There may be heavy rain, and there may be floods, and there may be strong winds that buffet those homes. Then, they will collapse completely."

28When Jesus finished teaching, the large groups of people {who had listened to him} felt amazed at the way he taught. **29**{They felt amazed} because he did not teach as the teachers of the Jewish law did. Rather, he taught them like someone whom God had authorized to do so.

Chapter 8

1When Jesus went down from the hill, large groups of people went wherever he went. **2**Then, a man who had a skin disease came and knelt before Jesus. He said to Jesus, "Lord, {please heal me!} I know that you are able to heal me if you are willing!"

3Then Jesus stretched out his hand and touched the man. He said, "I am willing {to heal you}, and I heal you now!" At that time, Jesus healed the man from his skin disease. **4**Then Jesus told him, "Do not tell anyone what just happened. Instead, go and show yourself to a priest {so that he can examine you and see that you no longer have the skin disease}. Also, present the offering that Moses required {for people whom God has healed from skin disease}. This will prove to the community {that you no longer have the skin disease}."

5While Jesus was visiting the city of Capernaum, an important Roman officer came to him. He urged Jesus {to help him}. **6**He said, "Lord, one of my servants is lying in bed at my home because he cannot move. He is suffering very much. {Please help him.}"

7Jesus answered, "I will go {to your home} and cure him."

8The important officer responded, "Lord, I am not important enough for you to come into my house. Instead {of going to my house}, you can cure my servant just by speaking a command. **9**{I know that you can do this} because I myself am a man who must obey the orders of my superiors. I also have soldiers who must obey my orders. When I

say to one of them, ‘Go there!’ he goes there. When I say to another one, ‘Come here!’ he comes {to me}. When I say to my slave, ‘Perform this task!’ he does it.”

10What the officer said impressed Jesus. Jesus declared to the people who were with him, “I have not met any Israelite who trusts me as much as this man does! What I have said is true. **11**So, here is what I want to tell you: many people from every part of the world{, including many non-Jewish people,} will arrive in God’s heavenly kingdom. They will feast along with {our Jewish ancestors,} Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. **12**However, God will cast out many people who think that they will participate in his kingdom. He will punish them in a dark place, where they will cry and sorrowfully grind their teeth.” **13**Then, Jesus told the important officer, “Return home. I will do for you what you have trusted me to do.” Jesus healed the servant at that exact time.

14After that, Jesus went to Peter’s home. There, he saw that Peter’s mother-in-law was lying in bed because she had a fever. **15**He touched her hand, and she recovered from the fever. Then she stood up and offered Jesus some food. **16**When it was evening, people brought to Jesus many men and women whom evil spiritual beings controlled. Jesus drove these evil spiritual beings out of those men and women just by speaking words. Also, he cured everyone who was sick. **17**So, what God said by speaking through the prophet Isaiah came true: “When we were sick, he helped us. When we were ill, he cured us.”

18When Jesus saw that there was a large group of people around him, he told his apprentices to take him {by boat} to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. **19**{Before they got into the boat}, a teacher of the Jewish law came up to Jesus and said to him, “My instructor, I want to go with you and be your apprentice.”

20Jesus replied, “Foxes have holes in the ground to live in, and birds have nests to live in, but I, the Son of Man, do not have a home to sleep in!”

21A different person who was one of Jesus’ apprentices said to him, “Lord, let me first go home and stay there until I bury my father. {Then I will go with you}.”

22Jesus responded, “Come with me and be my apprentice {now}. You cannot help anyone who has died.”

23After that, Jesus got on the boat, and his apprentices went with him. {They started sailing to the other side of the Sea of Galilee.} **24**{As they were sailing} a strong windstorm developed over the Sea of Galilee! Very high waves were splashing into the boat and filling it, but Jesus was asleep. **25**So Jesus’ apprentices came over to wake him up. They said to him, “Lord, please help us! We are all going to die!”

26Jesus answered, “You should not be so afraid. You should trust God more than you do!” Then he stood up. He scolded the wind and the water, and everything became calm.

27{What happened} impressed the apprentices. They wondered, “What kind of person is Jesus? The wind and the water do what he says!”

28After that, they arrived on the other side {of the Sea of Galilee}, in the region where the Gadarene people lived. {When they landed}, two men whom demons controlled came up to Jesus. They came from the burial caves. They were strong and dangerous. Because of them, no one could travel on the road {that went near the burial caves}. **29**They shouted to Jesus, “Leave us alone, you who are God’s Son! You should not arrive to punish us before it is the time {that God has appointed}.” **30**Now there was a large herd of pigs grazing relatively far away from them. **31**The demons pleaded with Jesus, “When you drive us out {of these two men}, please allow us to control that herd of pigs!”

32Jesus answered, “I will allow that!” So, the demons left the men and began to control the pigs. Then, the whole herd of pigs rushed down the steep bank into the Sea of Galilee! They died there in the sea. **33**Then those who were taking care of the pigs ran away. They went to the nearby town, where they told people about everything that had happened, including what had happened to the men whom the demons had controlled. **34**Then many people who lived in that town went to see Jesus! When they met him, they pleaded with him to leave their area.

Chapter 9

1After that, Jesus and his apprentices got into a boat. They sailed across the Sea of Galilee and arrived back in the city of Capernaum, where Jesus was living. **2**Some people brought to Jesus a man who could not move! He was lying on a sleeping pad. Jesus perceived that these people believed {that he could heal the man}. So, he said to the man who could not move, “Do not worry, young man. I forgive you for your sins!”

3Some teachers of the Jewish law thought to themselves, “He is insulting God!”

4Jesus realized what they were thinking. He said, “You should not be thinking what is wrong! **5**You may think that it is easy to claim to forgive other people for their sins{, since it is difficult to prove whether this has happened}. Similarly, you may think that it is difficult to tell {someone who cannot move} to stand up and walk around{, since it is easy to prove whether this has happened}. **6**However, I want you to know that God has authorized me, the Son of Man, to forgive people on earth for their sins.” So, he said to the man who could not move, “Stand up, carry your sleeping pad, and go home!” **7**Then, the man stood up and went home. **8**Once the large groups of people {who were near Jesus} saw what had happened, they felt afraid. Also, they praised God for enabling people to do such amazing things.

9As Jesus was walking away from that place, he noticed a man whom people called Matthew. Matthew was sitting in the booth {where the people came to pay him the taxes that the government required}. Jesus said to him, “Come with me and be my apprentice!” So Matthew stood up and went with him as his apprentice.

10Later, Jesus was feasting in Matthew’s home. Many people who collected taxes and other sinful people arrived! They feasted with Jesus and his apprentices. **11**When the Pharisees saw {what Jesus was doing}, they told Jesus’ apprentices, “Your instructor should not be feasting with people who collect taxes and other sinful people.”

12Jesus learned what they said. He answered, “People who are well do not need a doctor. Rather, people who are sick need a doctor. **13**You should study and learn from what God has said in the Scriptures: ‘What I most want is that people treat each other mercifully, not that people present offerings to me.’ Much like that, I am here not to invite those who think they are righteous to come to me. Rather, {I invite} those who know that they have sinned {to come to me}.”

14Sometime later, the apprentices of John the Baptizer visited Jesus. They asked him, “We and the Pharisees frequently do not eat in order to please God. However, your apprentices do not do so. Why not?”

15Jesus answered, “The friends of the bridegroom do not grieve while the wedding celebration is still going on. However, someday the bridegroom will no longer be with his friends. Then they will not eat. **16**People do not place a piece of unshrunken cloth on old clothing in order to mend a hole. {That is} because{, when they washed the garment,} the new piece of cloth would shrink and completely rip out of the clothing. As a result, the hole would become even bigger! **17**Similarly, people do not put fresh wine into old skin bags {to store it}. If they did that, the skin bags would tear open {because they would not stretch when the fresh wine fermented and expanded}. That would ruin the skin bags, and the wine would spill out. On the contrary, people put fresh wine into new skin bags. That way, they do not ruin the wine and the bags.”

18As Jesus was speaking to John’s apprentices, an important man arrived! He knelt before Jesus and said, “My daughter just died. Please come with me and touch her. That way, she will live {again}.” **19**Jesus and his apprentices stood up, and they went with the man.

20-21 Now there was a woman who had been suffering for 12 years from a disease that caused continual bleeding. She thought, “Just touching Jesus’ robe will cure me.” So, she approached Jesus from behind, and she touched the hem of his robe.

22{After the woman touched Jesus’ robe}, Jesus turned around and looked at her. He said to her, “Do not worry, young woman. Because you believed {that I could heal you}, you are now well.” At that very moment, the woman became well.

23After that, Jesus arrived at the important man's home. He saw {people grieving there}. Some people were playing instruments, and many people were making a lot of noise. **24**He said to these people, "Leave! The young woman is not dead! She is only sleeping." Then, the people made fun of him {for saying that}. **25**After those people left, Jesus went {to where the girl was}. He took hold of her hand, and she {became alive again and} stood up. **26**After that, people throughout that whole area heard about what Jesus had done.

27When Jesus left the important man's house, two men who were blind went with him. They were shouting, "You who are a descendant of King David, help us!"

28After Jesus entered the house {where he was staying}, the blind men approached him. Jesus asked them, "Do you believe that I can heal you?"

They answered, "Yes, Lord, we do!"

29After {they said that,} he touched their eyes. He declared, "I will do for you what you have trusted me to do." **30**Then, they could see. Jesus sternly told them, "Do not tell anyone about what just happened!" **31**However, after the two men left, they told people throughout that whole area about what Jesus had done.

32While the two men were leaving, some people brought a man to Jesus! A demon was controlling him and keeping him from speaking. **33**Jesus drove the demon out of the man, and he was able to speak. What Jesus had done impressed the large groups of people {who were nearby}. They declared, "We have not seen anything like this before in our country Israel!"

34However, the Pharisees declared, "It is the leader of the demons who enables this man to drive out demons!"

35Jesus traveled to many of the cities and towns {in that area}. He instructed people {when they gathered} in the Jewish meeting places. He proclaimed the good news about God's kingdom. He cured people who were sick in any way. **36**Jesus observed that the large groups of people {who traveled wherever he went} seemed upset and confused. They were like sheep who did not have a sheepherder {to lead them and to take care of them}. So, Jesus pitied them. **37**So he told his apprentices, "Many people are ready to believe in me, but there are only a few people whom I can send out to help them. **38**So pray to God{, who wants all of those people to believe,} and plead with him for more people who can go and help them."

Chapter 10

1Then, Jesus told his 12 apprentices to come to him. He authorized them to drive demons out of people and to cure people who were sick in any way. **2**Here is a list of the names of the 12 men whom Jesus chose to represent him: Simon, whom people also call Peter; Andrew, Peter's {younger} brother; James, Zebedee's son; John, James' {younger} brother; **3**Philip; Bartholomew; Thomas; Matthew, a man who collected taxes; James, Alphaeus' son; Thaddaeus; **4**Simon the Zealot; and Judas Iscariot, who eventually helped to arrest Jesus.

5Jesus sent those 12 men {to represent him}. {Before they went}, he told them, "Do not travel to places where non-Jews live. Do not visit Samaritan towns. **6**Instead, go to your fellow Israelites. They are like sheep who have wandered off {and need help}. **7**While you are traveling, proclaim {to people}, 'God is about to establish his heavenly kingdom here.' **8**Cure people who are sick. Make people who have died alive again. Heal people with skin diseases. Drive demons out of people. I have not charged you money as I enable you to do these things. So, you should not charge other people money to do these things for them. **9**Do not pack any money to take with you. **10**Do not pack a traveler's bag, or an extra shirt, or sandals, or a walking stick. {I tell you not to bring these things} because people who work deserve their food. {So, the people whom you help will give you what you need}. **11**When you visit a city or town, look for someone who lives there who welcomes you. {When you find such a person}, stay in that person's home until you leave that area. **12**When you go into that person's home, say hello to the people who live there {and pray that God will make them peaceful}. **13**Suppose that the people who live in that house

really do welcome you. Then, God will make them peaceful, as you prayed. However, suppose that the people who live in that house do not welcome you. Then, God will not make them peaceful. **14**Whenever people do not welcome you or listen to what you say, you should leave that home or city. As you are going, shake the dust from that place off your feet {to show that you reject those people}. **15**{God will judge and punish} any people who reject you more severely than he will judge and punish the {wicked} people who lived in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. What I have said is true.

16I am sending you out {to represent me} to people who will be hostile to you, so you will be like sheep among wolves. Therefore, you need to be as clever as snakes are. You also need to be as innocent as small birds are. **17**Watch out for certain people. They will arrest you and accuse you in front of groups of important people. They will beat you in the Jewish meeting places. **18**Because you are my apprentices, people will accuse you before local rulers and kings. That way, you will tell those rulers and the rest of the non-Jews {about me}. **19**Whenever people arrest you and accuse you, do not worry about how you will respond. At that time, God will reveal to you what you should say. **20**{You can be sure of that} because the Holy Spirit, whom God your Father sends, will reveal to you what to say. You will not speak for yourself.

21Men will have someone arrest their own brothers, and they will ask the judge to execute them. Fathers {will do the same thing} to their own children. Children will rebel against their parents and cause them to die. **22**Because you are my apprentices, many people will be hostile to you. However, if you persevere {in being my apprentices} while people harm you, God will rescue you. **23**When people in one city try to harm you, you should quickly travel to another city. {You should do that} because I, the Son of Man, will return before you have proclaimed the good news in every town in Israel. What I have said is true.

24Apprentices are not greater than their teacher. Similarly, servants are not greater than their master. **25**Those apprentices should be content when they become like their teacher. Similarly, those servants {should be content when they become} like their master. Since people called the person who leads the family Satan, they will also call the people who are part of the family {bad names}. **26**So then, do not be afraid of those people. {I say that} because someday God will let everyone know everything people are trying to hide. **27**You should declare publicly everything I have said to you privately. You should shout for everyone to hear what you have heard me say quietly. **28**Do not be afraid of people. They can kill you physically, but they cannot kill you spiritually. Instead, you should be afraid of God. He can destroy you both spiritually and physically in hell. **29**Think about the sparrows. {They have so little value that} you can buy two of them for only one small coin. However, God your Father knows about it whenever one sparrow dies. **30**God even knows how many hairs there are on your head. **31**So, do not be afraid, because you are more precious {to God} than many sparrows.

32If people tell others that they are my apprentices, then I will say to God my Father, who rules from heaven, that those people are my apprentices. **33**However, if they tell others that they are not my apprentices, then I will say to God my Father, who rules from heaven, that those people are not my apprentices.

34You should not think that I am here so that people will live together peacefully. Indeed, I am here so that people quarrel, not so that they live peacefully. **35**In fact, I am here so that {family members} oppose each other. A man will oppose his father. A woman will oppose her mother. A woman who married {a man} will oppose her husband's mother. **36**People who are part of a person's family will be those who oppose that person.

37People who care for their fathers or mothers more than they care for me are not behaving as my apprentices should. People who care for their sons or daughters more than they care for me are not behaving as my apprentices should. **38**People who are not willing to suffer or die, as if they were carrying their own crosses, when they come with me as my apprentices are not behaving as my apprentices should. **39**People who do anything to stay alive will not truly live. However, people who are willing to die because they are my apprentices will truly live.

40When people welcome you, it is the same as welcoming me. When people welcome me, it is the same as welcoming {God the Father}, who sent me here. **41**As for those who welcome someone because they know that person speaks for God, God will reward them in the same way that he rewards people who speak for him. As for

those who welcome someone because they know that person does what is right, God will reward them in the same way that he rewards people who do what is right. **42**As for those who offer an unimportant person cold water to drink just because they know that person is my apprentice, God will most certainly reward them. What I have said is true."

Chapter 11

1So, Jesus completed instructing his 12 apprentices {about what they should do}. Then, he left that place in order to proclaim {the good news to people} in the towns throughout the area.

2Meanwhile, John the Baptizer was in jail. People told him about what {Jesus} the Messiah was doing. So, he sent some of his apprentices **3**to ask Jesus, "Are you the one whom {God promised} would come, or should we be waiting for someone else?"

4So Jesus answered John's apprentices, "Go back and tell John what you have heard and seen. **5**People who were blind are now seeing. People who could not walk are now walking. People who had skin diseases no longer have them. People who were deaf can now hear. People who were dead are alive again. I am proclaiming good news to poor people. **6**God will bless anyone who {sees what I do and hears what I teach and} continues to believe in me."

7When John's apprentices left, Jesus started to talk to the large groups of people about John. He said, "Surely you did not travel to John in the desolate area to see someone who often changed his mind, who was like the thin stalk of a plant that the wind shakes. **8**Surely you did not travel {to the desolate area} to see someone who wore fancy clothes. You know very well that the people who wear fancy clothes live in palaces{, not in desolate areas}. **9**Surely you traveled {to the desolate area} to see a man who spoke for God. Yes{, that is who John is}! But I want to tell you that John is more significant than other people who speak for God. **10**He is the one about whom a prophet wrote in the Scriptures: 'Listen, I am sending my messenger ahead of you. He will make things ready for when you come.'

11Of all the people who have ever lived, there has been no one more important than John the Baptizer. However, the most insignificant people who participate in God's heavenly kingdom are more important than John. What I have said is true. **12**From the time when John the Baptizer began to preach publicly until this time, people have attacked God's heavenly kingdom. Indeed, violent people try to conquer it. **13**Further, before John {began to preach}, the laws that God gave Moses and the things that the prophets wrote predicted {what is now happening}. **14**In fact, if you trust what I say, you can know that John is the one {whom God promised} would come, {the one who is like} the prophet Elijah. **15**You should think carefully about what you just heard me say!

16{I will tell you} what {you people who live in} this time period are like. You are like children playing games in an open area. They call out to their friends, **17**'We played happy music for you on the flute, but you did not dance! Then we sang sad funeral songs for you, but you did not grieve!' **18**Similarly, when John came to you and often did not eat or drink, people {rejected him and} said, 'A demon is controlling him!' **19**But when I, the Son of Man, came to you and I enjoyed food and drink, people {rejected me and} said, 'Look! This man eats too much food and drinks too much wine, and he associates with people who collect taxes and other sinful people!' But those who are wise themselves recognize that what John and I do is also wise."

20Now people who lived in the towns where Jesus had done many powerful things did not stop doing what was wrong. So, Jesus began to scold them: **21**"How terrible it will be for you people who live in the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida! I say this because I did powerful things while I was in your cities. If I had done those same powerful things in {the ancient cities of} Tyre and Sidon, the {wicked} people who lived there would have stopped doing what was wrong. They would have shown how sorry they were by wearing coarse clothing and putting ashes on their heads. **22**So I want to tell you that when God judges everyone, he will punish you more severely than {the wicked people who lived in} Tyre and Sidon. **23**I also have something to say to you people who live in the town of Capernaum. You may think that God is going to give you great rewards. No, God is not going to reward you at all! I say this because I did powerful things while I was in your town. If I had done those same powerful things in {the

city of} Sodom, the {wicked} people who lived there {would have stopped doing what was wrong, and} God would not have destroyed them. **24**So I want to tell you that when God judges everyone, he will punish you more severely than {the wicked people who lived in} the region of Sodom."

25Then Jesus responded by praying, "God my Father, you are Lord over everything you have made. I praise you that you have prevented people who think they are smart from understanding things. Instead, you have revealed them to people who accept {what you say} as readily as little children do. **26**That is true, my Father, and you have done that because it pleased you to do so."

27{Then Jesus told the people who were there,} "God, my Father, has given everything to me. Only my Father really knows me, his Son. And only I, his Son, really know my Father. But I do choose to show some people who he is. **28**Many of you feel tired and are struggling. Become my apprentices! I will enable you to rest. **29**I am not forceful or proud, and I will help you to rest. So, do what I command and listen to what I teach. **30**{I say that} because you can easily do what I command. Indeed, you can easily do what I ask you to do."

Chapter 12

1Some time later, Jesus {and his apprentices} were walking through grain fields during one of the Jewish days of rest. His apprentices became hungry, so they started to pick some grain and eat it. **2**Some Pharisees saw {the apprentices picking grain}. They said to Jesus, "Look! Your apprentices are working on the Jewish day of rest. Our law forbids us to do that."

3Jesus replied, "Consider the story in the Scriptures about what King David did when he and the men who were with him became very hungry. **4**As you know, David entered the sacred tent. He ate some of the bread that had been on display before God, even though the law prohibited him and the men who were with him from doing that. Only priests could eat that bread. **5**Likewise, consider the laws in the Scriptures that permit priests to work during the Jewish days of rest because they are serving in the Jewish sanctuary. **6**However, I want you to know that there is now something even more important than the Jewish sanctuary. **7**Suppose that you truly understood what God has said in the Scriptures: 'What I most want is that people treat each other mercifully, not that people present offerings to me.' Then, you would not have declared {my apprentices} guilty when they have actually not disobeyed {the laws about the Jewish day of rest}. **8**{I say those things} because I, the Son of Man, can decide {what is right for people to do} during the Jewish day of rest!"

9Then Jesus left the grain fields and visited one of the Jewish meeting places. **10**Now there was a man there who could not move his hand. The Pharisees wanted to accuse Jesus {of disobeying the laws about not working on the Sabbath}. So, they asked Jesus, "Does our law allow us to cure {people from their diseases} during Jewish days of rest?"

11Jesus replied, "Suppose that one of you had a single sheep. Also suppose that this sheep fell into a deep hole on a Jewish day of rest. You would certainly pull it out of the hole{, even though this would be doing work on the Jewish day of rest}! **12**Therefore, {since} people are more important than sheep{, you should help others even more than you help sheep on Jewish days of rest}. So then, the laws that God gave Moses allow people to do what is good on Jewish days of rest." **13**After {saying that}, Jesus commanded the man, "Extend the hand {that you cannot move}!" The man extended his hand, and he could move it just as well as his other hand. **14**Then the Pharisees left {the Jewish meeting place}. They started planning how they could kill Jesus.

15Jesus knew {that the Pharisees were planning to kill him}. So, he left that area. Many people went with him, and he cured all of them {who were sick}. **16**Jesus commanded them strongly that they should not tell other people about him. **17**So, what God said by speaking through the prophet Isaiah came true:

18"Consider the one who serves me, whom I selected.

I love him, and what he does pleases me.

I will empower him with the Holy Spirit.

He will declare to the non-Jews that I do what is right.

19He will not quarrel with people. He will not shout loudly.

He will not speak to many people in public areas.

20

He will be gentle with weak people.

He will be kind to feeble people.

{He will do those things} until he successfully completes doing what is right.

21Non-Jewish people will confidently trust in him."

22After that, some people brought a man to Jesus. A demon was controlling him and keeping him from seeing or speaking. Jesus cured the man, and he was able to speak and see. **23**What Jesus had done impressed all the large groups of people {who were nearby}. They declared {to each other}, "Perhaps this man is the special descendant of King David."

24However, the Pharisees heard {them saying that}. They responded, "This man forces out demons only because Beelzebul, who rules the demons, enables him to do so."

25Jesus realized what they were thinking. So he said to them, "When the people in one nation fight against each other, they will destroy their nation. When people who live in the same town or household fight against each other, that town or household will not last. **26**Suppose that Satan enabled people to force out his own demons. In that case, he would be fighting against himself. So, he would soon cease to rule over the demons! **27**Further, suppose that Beelzebul is enabling me to force out demons. Then, it must also be true that he is enabling your apprentices to force out demons. {But you know that is not true.} So your own apprentices prove that you are wrong. **28**Actually, the Holy Spirit enables me to force out demons. That means that God is establishing his kingdom among you. **29**Before thieves can break into the home of a strong man and take his belongings, they must first tie up the strong man. After that, they can take the belongings from his home.

30Anyone who is not supporting me is opposing me. Anyone who is not bringing people to me is sending them away from me.

31So then, here is what I want to tell you: God will forgive many people who sin in many ways or say bad things {about God or others}. However, God will not forgive people who say bad things about the Holy Spirit. **32**Further, God will forgive people who say bad things about me, the Son of Man. However, God will not forgive people who say bad things about the Holy Spirit. {He will} not {forgive them} right now or at any later time.

33You must decide either that both a tree and its fruit are healthy or that both a tree and its fruit are unhealthy. {I say that} because you can tell if a tree is healthy or unhealthy by what kind of fruit it produces. Similarly, you can tell what people are really like by the things that they do. **34**You people are sneaky and dangerous like poisonous snakes! Because you are wicked, you cannot say anything good. {I say that} because people speak based on what they are thinking about. **35**Good people say good things because they think good things. Evil people say evil things because they think evil things. **36**Here is what I want you to know: when God judges everyone, he will hold people responsible for all the useless things that they have said. **37**In fact, God will declare that you are either innocent or guilty based on what you have said."

38After {Jesus said those things}, some teachers of the Jewish law and some Pharisees responded, "Instructor, we want to see you perform a miracle {that proves that God sent you}."

39Then Jesus replied to them, “You people who are alive right now are wicked and faithless. You want me to do a miracle {that proves that God sent me}. However, the only miracle you will see is a miracle like the one that happened to the prophet Jonah. **40**{A huge fish swallowed Jonah, and} he was inside this fish for three whole days. {Then, God had the fish spit him out.} Similarly, people will bury me, the Son of Man, and I will be in a tomb for three whole days. {Then, I will live again.} **41**The people who lived in the ancient city of Nineveh stopped sinning when Jonah preached to them. And now there is something even more important than {the prophet} Jonah. {However, you have not stopped sinning.} Therefore, when God judges everyone, the people who lived in Nineveh will stand up and condemn the people who are alive right now. **42**Long ago the Queen of Sheba traveled a great distance to listen to the wise things that King Solomon said. And now there is something even more important than Solomon. {However, you have not really listened to what I say.} Therefore, when God judges everyone, she will stand up and condemn the people who are alive right now.

43Listen to this story: an evil spirit leaves someone and wanders around in desolate areas looking for someone else to live in. However, it does not find anyone there. **44**After that, it says {to itself}, ‘I am going to go back to the person I used to live in!’ So it goes back and finds that the person is like a house that someone has cleaned and organized, but no one is living in it. **45**Then this evil spirit goes and gets seven other spirits that are even more evil than it is. They all enter that person and begin living in him. That person experienced bad things before, but now he will experience worse things. Something like that is what you wicked people who are alive right now will experience.”

46As Jesus was saying those things to the large groups of people, his mother and his {younger} brothers {arrived and} waited outside {where he was}. They wanted to talk with him. **47**A person told him, “Your mother and your {younger} brothers are waiting outside. They want to talk with you.”

48Jesus replied, “I will tell you whom I consider to be my mother and my brothers.” **49**He pointed to his apprentices and said, “These are the people whom I consider to be my mother and my brothers! **50**In fact, when a person does what God my Father, who rules from heaven, wants, I consider that person to be my brother or sister or mother.”

Chapter 13

1That same day, Jesus left the house {where he had been teaching}. He {walked to the Sea of Galilee and} sat down {to teach} next to it. **2**Then large groups of people came to where Jesus was. Because {there were so many people}, he got into a boat and sat down there {to teach}. All the people stood on the shore {of the Sea of Galilee to listen to him}.

3Jesus began to use stories to instruct them about many things. He said, “Listen to this: a farmer began to plant some grain seeds. **4**As he was scattering them over the soil, some of the seeds fell on the path. Then some birds flew down and ate those seeds up. **5**Other seeds fell on shallow soil on top of a layer of rocks. Because they were growing in shallow soil, the seeds sprouted very quickly. **6**However, the sun shone on the new plants and dried them up. Then, because they did not have good roots, the plants died. **7**Other seeds fell onto an area full of thorny plants. These thorny plants grew quickly and crowded out the grain plants. **8**Finally, other seeds fell on fertile soil. {They sprouted,} and the plants produced a crop. Some plants produced 100 {grains of wheat each}, others produced 60 {grains each}, and others produced 30 {grains each}. **9**You should think carefully about what you just heard me say!”

10Then, the apprentices came to Jesus and asked him, “Why do you use stories to instruct these people?”

11Jesus replied, “God has revealed to you hidden things about his heavenly kingdom. However, he has not revealed {those things} to these people. **12**{I say that} because God will reveal even more to people who already know some things {about God’s heavenly kingdom}. They will know many things. In contrast, God will cause people who know very little {about God’s heavenly kingdom} to know nothing about it at all. **13**I use stories to instruct these people because they can look at things, but they do not really see them. They can hear what people say, but they do not really listen to it or learn from it. **14**What God said by speaking through the prophet Isaiah has come true for them:

‘You will hear things, but you will not learn from them.

You will look at things, but you will not really see them.

15{These people do not understand} because they have become stubborn;

their ears are almost deaf;

and they have closed their eyes because they do not want to see.

They do not want to listen

or try to understand,

for then they would come back to me,

and I would welcome and forgive them.’

16However, it is very good for you, because you really see. {It is very good} for you, because you really listen.
17Indeed, many people who spoke for God and other people who did what was right would have wanted to see the things that you are seeing me do. But they did not get to see them{, because they lived long ago}. They would have wanted to hear the things that I have said to you. But they did not get to hear them{, because they lived long ago}. What I have said is true.

18So then, listen to {me explain} the story about the farmer who planted grain seeds. **19**Some people hear the message about God’s kingdom, but they do not learn from it. Then Satan comes and takes the message they heard away from their minds. These people are like the seeds that fell on the path. **20**Other people are like the seeds that fell on shallow soil on top of a layer of rocks. When they hear the message {about God’s kingdom}, they rejoice and quickly believe it. **21**However, they are like plants without good roots, which do not live very long. In fact, when bad things happen or when people hurt them because they accepted the message {about God’s kingdom}, they quickly stop believing it. **22**Other people are like the seeds that fell onto an area full of thorny plants. After they hear the message {about God’s kingdom}, they continue to focus on things in this world and on becoming rich, even though being rich is not as helpful as they think it will be. Focusing on these things makes the message ineffective, just as thorny plants crowd out the good plants and keep them from producing a crop. **23**Other people are like the seeds that fell on fertile soil. When they hear the message {about God’s kingdom}, they learn from it. They are like the plants that produced a crop. Some plants produced 100 {grains of wheat each}, others produced 60 {grains each}, and others produced 30 {grains each}.”

24Then Jesus told the people another story. He said, “Here is what God’s heavenly kingdom is like: a farmer planted some fertile grain seeds in his field. **25**However, as the farmer and his workers were asleep, someone who hated the farmer went into the field and planted weed seeds among the grain seeds. Then, he left {before the farmer and his workers woke up}. **26**Some time later, the wheat plants sprouted and began to produce grain. At the same time, the weed plants also {sprouted, and the workers} noticed them. **27**So, the workers reported this to the farmer. They said, ‘Sir, we know that you planted fertile seeds in your field. However, weed plants are growing there!’

28The farmer replied, ‘A person who hates me planted these weed plants.’

Then his servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go {to the field} and remove all the weeds plants?’

29He answered, ‘Do not do that. If you did, you might remove some of the wheat plants while you were removing the weed plants, since they are growing together. **30**Allow the wheat and weed plants to grow in the field together until we begin to harvest them. Then, I will command the people who are harvesting, “Pull up the weed plants first. Collect them in groups and burn them. After that, harvest the wheat plants and store the grain in my storehouse.”””

31Then Jesus told the people another story. He said, “Here is what God’s heavenly kingdom is like: a man plants a tiny mustard seed in his field. **32**This kind of seed is smaller than other kinds of seeds. However, after it sprouts, the

plant becomes a tree that is bigger than other plants that people grow. In fact, birds land on its branches and make nests there."

33Then Jesus told the people another story. {He said,} "Here is what God's heavenly kingdom is like: a woman measured out some yeast and mixed it with about 25 kilograms of flour. The yeast made the whole batch of dough swell up."

34Jesus used stories to teach all these things to the large groups of people {who were standing on the shore of the sea}. In fact, he taught them by using stories only. **35**So, what God said by speaking through one of the prophets came true:

"I will speak by using stories.

I will reveal things that have been secret since {God} created everything."

36After {speaking these stories}, Jesus departed from the large groups of people and entered the house {where he was staying}. His apprentices went to him and asked, "Please teach us what the story about the weed plants in the field means."

37Jesus replied, "The farmer who planted some fertile grain seeds is like me, the Son of Man. **38**The field is like the world. The fertile grain seeds are like people who participate in God's kingdom. The weed plants are like people who obey Satan. **39**The person who hated the farmer and planted the weed seeds is like the devil. The time when the workers begin to harvest {the grain} is like when this time period will end. The people who are harvesting are like angels. **40**The workers collect the weed plants and burn them. That is like what will happen when this time period ends. **41**I, the Son of Man, will have my angels collect everything that causes people to sin and everyone who does what is wrong. They will remove those things and people from my kingdom. **42**Then, the angels will cast those things and people into hell, which is like a burning oven. There people will cry and sorrowfully grind their teeth. **43**After that, the people who did what was right will live in God their Father's kingdom. They will be as glorious as the sun when it shines. You should think carefully about what you just heard me say!

44Here is what God's heavenly kingdom is like: A man discovered a secret treasure in a field. He was very happy, but he put the treasure back into its secret place. He went home and sold everything that he owned. Then, he bought the field {so that he could have the treasure in it}.

45Here is what God's heavenly kingdom is also like: a trader wanted some valuable pearls. **46**Eventually, he saw a very expensive pearl. He went home and sold everything that he owned. Then, he bought that pearl.

47Here is what God's heavenly kingdom is also like: people used a net to catch fish in a lake. They caught many kinds of fish. **48**When the net was full {of fish}, the people pulled it onto the shore. They sat down {to sort through the fish that they had caught}. They put the edible fish into buckets and threw away the useless fish. **49**That is like what will happen when this time period ends. Angels will come, and they will divide people who do what is wrong from people who do what is right. **50**Then, the angels will cast the people who do what is wrong into hell, which is like a burning oven. There they will cry and sorrowfully grind their teeth.

51Do you know what all these things {that I have taught you} mean?"

The apprentices answered, "Yes{, we know what they mean}."

52Jesus responded, "So then, consider teachers whose leader has trained them to participate in God's heavenly kingdom. They are like people who manage households. {That is because} both the teachers and the people who manage households offer old and new things that are valuable."

53So, Jesus completed telling these stories. Then, he left that place. **54**Then Jesus traveled to {the city of Nazareth,} where he had grown up. He instructed the people there when they gathered in the Jewish meeting place. What he said impressed them, and they said {to each other}, "We do not know how this man became so wise and powerful. **55**He is just the woodworker's son. His mother's name is Mary, and his {younger} brothers are James, Joseph,

Simon, and Judas. **56**All his sisters live here in our town. So, we do not know how this man learned to do these things."

57These people rejected Jesus. So, Jesus told them, "The only ones who do not respect people who speak for God are those from where they grew up and their own families." **58**Since the people did not trust in him, Jesus did very few powerful things in that place.

Chapter 14

1While Jesus was teaching and doing powerful things, King Herod Antipas{, the ruler over the region of Galilee,} learned what he was doing. **2**He told his attendants, "This man must be John the Baptizer. God has made him alive again, and that is why he does these powerful things."

3-4{Herod said that because John had already died.} Here is how that happened: Herod married Herodias, who had previously been the wife of Herod's brother Philip. John the Baptizer told Herod, "Our law forbids you to marry Herodias{, your sister-in-law}." So, Herod told his soldiers to arrest John. They tied him up and put him in jail. **5**However, Herod was afraid of the large group of people who believed that John spoke for God. So, even though he wanted to have his soldiers execute John{, he did not do that}.

6Sometime later, during Herod's birthday party, Herodias' daughter danced {for him and his guests}. Herod greatly enjoyed her dancing. **7**So, he solemnly promised that he would give her whatever she wanted. **8**Her mother, Herodias, had already told her what to ask for. So, she said to Herod, "I want you to cut off John the Baptizer's head and bring it to me here on a plate!" **9**King Herod was sad {about what she asked for}. However, because he had solemnly promised in front of all his guests {to give her what she asked for}, he told one of his men to do what she asked. **10**He had the man go to the jail and cut off John's head there. **11**Then, the man put John's head on a plate and gave it to Herodias' daughter. She gave it to her mother. **12**Later, John's apprentices went to the jail. They took John's dead body and buried it. Then, they went to Jesus and told him what had happened.

13After Jesus heard {that John was dead}, he sailed {with his apprentices} in a boat on the Sea of Galilee to a place where no one lived. Then, the large groups of people learned {that he had traveled there}. They left their towns and walked around the Sea of Galilee to join him. **14**When Jesus got out of the boat, he saw a large group of people. He pitied them, and he cured those who were sick.

15When it was evening, the apprentices approached Jesus. They said to him, "This is a place where no one lives, and it is very late in the day. So, please tell the large groups of people to walk to the small towns that are nearby, where they can buy food to eat."

16Jesus replied, "They do not need to leave {to buy food}. I want you to provide them with food to eat!"

17The apprentices replied, "We have very little food! We only have five loaves of bread and two fish."

18Then Jesus said, "Bring those things to me." **19**Jesus told the large groups of people to sit down on the ground. He picked up the five loaves of bread and the two fish. Then he thanked God for the food. After that, he tore the bread into pieces and gave the pieces to his apprentices. They distributed them to the large groups of people. **20**Everyone ate {the bread}, and they all had enough to eat. Then the apprentices gathered the food that was left. They filled 12 large containers with the leftovers! **21**About 5, 000 men ate {the bread}, and there were women and children there too!

22As soon as {everyone was done eating}, Jesus had his apprentices get into a boat and sail across {the Sea of Galilee} without him. He stayed behind to tell the large groups of people to go home. **23**After he told the large groups of people to go home, he climbed to the top of a hill to pray {to God} by himself. When it became dark, he was on top of the hill by himself. **24**Meanwhile, the apprentices were on the boat in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. The wind was blowing from where they wanted to go, so many waves were striking the boat. **25**Later, soon before

morning, Jesus joined them. He was walking on top of the Sea of Galilee! **26**When the apprentices saw Jesus walking on top of the Sea of Galilee, it disturbed them. {They did not know that it was Jesus, so} they said {to each other} that he must be a dangerous spiritual being. They were so afraid that they shouted loudly. **27**As soon as {they shouted loudly}, Jesus said to them, “Do not worry! I am {Jesus}. Stop being afraid!”

28Peter replied, “My Lord, please show me that it is really you. I ask that you tell me to walk on top of the water to you!”

29Jesus said {to Peter}, “Walk to me!”

So, Peter stepped out of the boat and walked on top of the water toward Jesus. **30**However, Peter realized how powerful the storm was, and he was afraid. Then he started to sink into the water. He shouted {to Jesus}, “My Lord, please rescue me!”

31As soon as {Peter shouted}, Jesus reached out and lifted Peter up out of the water. Then he said to Peter, “You should not have been unsure {that I could make you walk on top of the water}. You should trust God more than you do!”

32Then Jesus and Peter climbed into the boat. At that moment, the wind stopped blowing. **33**Then the apprentices who were in the boat worshiped Jesus. They declared, “You really are God’s Son!”

34After they finished sailing across the Sea of Galilee, they landed on the shore in the region of Gennesaret. **35**The men in that region recognized Jesus. So they sent people to the nearby areas {to say that Jesus had arrived}. Then people {from those areas} brought to Jesus many others who were sick. **36**Those who were sick asked Jesus to allow them just to touch the hem of his robe. Everyone who did so became healthy.

Chapter 15

1After that, some Pharisees and teachers of the Jewish law who were from the city of Jerusalem visited Jesus. They told him, **2**“Your apprentices do not cleanse their hands before they eat. So, they are disobeying the teachings we received from our ancestors. They should not do that!”

3Jesus replied, “Sometimes you use the teachings that you received to disobey the laws that God gave us. You should not do that! **4**For example, God gave this law: ‘Treat your parents respectfully.’ {He} also {gave this law}: ‘Execute anyone who insults his or her parents.’ **5**However, you tell people that they can say to their parents, ‘I have given to God everything that I could have used to provide for you.’ **6**Then, you tell these people that they cannot treat their parents respectfully {by providing for them}. In that way, you use the teachings that you received to ignore what God commanded. **7**You say that you obey God, but you really do not! Isaiah {the prophet} was right when God spoke through him about you,

8‘You people treat me respectfully when you talk,

but you do not really care about me.

9When you worship me, it is useless.

{That is because} you use only what humans have commanded to instruct others.’”

10Then Jesus told the large group of people to come to him. He told them, “Listen {to what I am about to say} and learn {from it}. **11**Whatever people eat cannot make them unclean. Rather, it is what people say that makes them unclean.”

12Later, his apprentices went to him and asked him, “We want you to know that the Pharisees heard what you said and became very upset.”

13Jesus replied, “{Those Pharisees are like} plants that God my Father, who rules from heaven, did not plant. {He will punish them in the same way that} he would tear up such plants. **14**Do not listen to them. They do not know what they should be teaching. They are like blind people who guide other blind people right into a hole in the ground.”

15Peter replied, “Please tell us what that story means.” **16**Jesus answered, “You too have not yet learned what I mean. **17**I want you to realize that everything that people eat simply goes into their stomachs. Eventually, their bodies expel what they ate into toilets. **18**What actually makes people unclean is what they say, which shows what they think and care about. **19**In fact, it is because of what people think and care about that they think evil things, kill others, are sexually unfaithful to their spouses, have improper sex, steal things, speak what is untrue, and say bad things {about God or others}. **20**It is doing those things that makes people unclean. However, when people do not cleanse their hands before they eat, that does not make them unclean.”

21After that, Jesus {and his apprentices} left the region of Gennesaret. They traveled to the areas near the cities of Tyre and Sidon. **22**Then, a non-Jewish woman who was from those areas visited Jesus. She called out to him, “My Lord, you who are a descendant of King David, help me! A demon is controlling my daughter and making her suffer.”

23However, Jesus did not say anything to her. Then his apprentices came to him and said, “This woman is {bothering us by} following us and calling out to you. Please tell her to go home.”

24Jesus answered them, “God told me to go only to my fellow Israelites. They are like sheep who have wandered off {and need help}.”

25Then the woman approached Jesus. She knelt down in front of him and pled, “My Lord, please help me!”

26Jesus replied, “Suppose that someone takes food for children and gives it to dogs instead. That is not appropriate! {That is why I am not helping you.}”

27The woman replied, “My Lord, what you say is correct. In fact, though, dogs do eat leftovers that their owners spill on the ground. {What I am asking you to do is like those leftovers.}”

28When {he heard that,} Jesus told her, “You have impressed me because you trust me very much! I will do for you what you want me to do.” At that very moment, Jesus cured her daughter.

29After that, Jesus {and his apprentices} left {the areas near the cities of Tyre and Sidon}. They traveled to the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Then Jesus went up on a hill and sat down. **30**Large groups of people came to him. They brought people who could not walk, people who could not see, people who could not use their hands normally, people who could not speak, and people who were sick in many other ways. They set these people down in front of Jesus. Then, Jesus cured these people. **31**The large group of people saw {what Jesus had done}. People who could not talk were now speaking. People who could not use their hands normally were now able to do so. People who could not walk were now walking. People who could not see were now seeing. What Jesus had done impressed the large group of people. They praised the God whom the Israelites worship.

32After that, Jesus told his apprentices to come to him. He said to them, “I pity the large group of people. They have already spent three days with me, and they do not have any food to eat. Further, I do not want to tell them to go home while they are hungry, because then they might pass out while they are walking home.”

33The apprentices replied, “In this place where no one lives, we certainly do not have enough food for this large group of people to have enough to eat!”

34Jesus asked them, “How many loaves of bread do you have with you?”

They replied, “We have with us seven loaves of bread and a few little fish.”

35Then Jesus told the large group of people to sit down on the ground. **36**He picked up the seven loaves of bread and the fish. Then he thanked God for the food. After that, he tore the bread into pieces and gave the pieces to his

apprentices. They distributed them to the large group of people. **37**Everyone ate {the bread}, and they all had enough to eat. Then the apprentices gathered the food that was left. They filled seven large containers with the leftovers! **38**{About} 4, 000 men ate {the bread}, and there were women and children there too! **39**After he told the large group of people to go home, Jesus climbed into a boat. He {and his apprentices} sailed to the areas near the town of Magadan.

Chapter 16

1Some Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus in order to investigate him. They said to him, “We want you to perform a miracle that shows that God sent you.”

2He answered them, “[When it is evening and the sky looks red, you know that there will be good weather {the next day}. **3**When it is morning and the sky looks red and cloudy, {you know that} there will be storms that day. So, you realize what it means when the sky looks a certain way. However, you do not {realize} what God is doing right now.] **4**You people who are alive right now are wicked and faithless. You want me to do a miracle {that proves that God sent me}. However, the only miracle you will see is a miracle like the one that happened to {the prophet} Jonah.” Then Jesus {and his apprentices} departed from the Pharisees and Sadducees.

5They sailed to the other side {of the Sea of Galilee}. Then, the apprentices realized that they had not remembered to take any bread with them. **6**At that point, Jesus said to them, “Be alert and watch out for the yeast that the Pharisees and Sadducees use.”

7Then the apprentices told each other, “{He must have said that} because we did not take any bread with us.”

8Jesus realized {what they were saying to each other}. He told them, “You should not be telling each other that you do not have bread. You should trust God more than you do! **9**You should already remember and understand how I fed 5, 000 men with just five loaves of bread. Then you gathered the food that was left into {12} large containers. **10**{You should also remember and understand} how I fed 4, 000 men with just seven loaves of bread. Then you gathered the food that was left into {seven} large containers. **11**I want you to understand that I am speaking about bread in a figurative way. So {I say again}, watch out for the yeast that the Pharisees and Sadducees use.” **12**After {Jesus said that}, the apprentices realized that {he was telling them to watch out for} what the Pharisees and Sadducees were teaching. He was not telling them to watch out for the yeast that people use to make bread.

13Sometime later, Jesus {and his apprentices} arrived in the area near the city of Caesarea Philippi. Then Jesus asked his apprentices, “Who do people say that I, the Son of Man, really am?”

14The apprentices replied, “People say that you are one of the prophets {who has come back to life}. {More specifically,} some people say that you are John the Baptizer. Other people say that you are the prophet Elijah. Other people say that you are the prophet Jeremiah.”

15Jesus asked, “As for you, who do you say that I really am?”

16Simon Peter replied, “You are the Messiah! You are the Son of the only real God.”

17Jesus responded, “Simon, descendant of Jonah, God my Father, who rules from heaven, has blessed you. He has made known to you what you said. In fact, no human could have made it known to you. **18**I also want you to know that I will make you become like your name, Peter, which means ‘rock.’ I will make you like a foundation stone on which I will construct a building, which represents everyone who believes in me. Even when those people die, that will not destroy them. **19**I will commission you to oversee God’s heavenly kingdom. When you confirm something here on earth, God will confirm it in heaven. When you nullify something here on earth, God will nullify it in heaven.” **20**After that, Jesus ordered the apprentices not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

21From then on, Jesus the Messiah began to teach his apprentices that he had to travel to the city of Jerusalem. There, the Jewish leaders, the ruling priests, and the teachers of the Jewish law would hurt him very much and have people kill him. During the third day after he died, God would make him alive again. **22**Then Peter spoke to Jesus privately. He began to scold Jesus, "My Lord, do not say those things! What you have spoken about will never happen to you."

23Then Jesus faced Peter. He said, "Do not try to stop me. You are behaving as Satan does! You are thinking about what humans care about instead of thinking about what God cares about. Because of that, you are trying to make me do what is wrong."

24Next, Jesus said to all his apprentices, "People who want to come with me and be my apprentices must refuse to do what they want to do. They must be willing to suffer or die, as if they were carrying their own crosses, when they come with me as my apprentices. **25**{That is} because people who are willing to do anything to stay alive will not truly live. However, people who are willing to die because they are my apprentices will truly live. **26**Suppose that some people acquire everything they could possibly want. However, they can no longer truly live. That is not worth it! People cannot acquire anything that is as valuable as truly living. **27**{That is important} because I, the Son of Man, will soon return with my angels. I will be as glorious as God my Father. At that time, I will {justly} reward or punish people for whatever they have done.

28Some of you who are here with me will definitely see me, the Son of Man, ruling over my kingdom before you die. What I have said is true."

Chapter 17

1Six days later, Jesus climbed up a tall mountain. He had Peter, James, and James' {younger} brother John go with him. No one else was with them. **2**Then, the three apprentices saw Jesus change how he appeared. His face became as radiant as the sun. His clothes became bright white. **3**After that, Moses and Elijah{, who were prophets from long ago,} appeared to the three apprentices! These prophets were speaking to Jesus.

4Peter responded by saying to Jesus, "My Lord, it is appropriate for all of us to be here. If you want me to, I will build three shelters. You, Moses, and Elijah can each use one." **5**As Peter was talking, a radiant cloud covered all of them! Then God spoke from the cloud! He declared, "This man is my Son, the one whom I love dearly. What he does pleases me. Do what he says."

6After the three apprentices heard that, they became extremely afraid. They kneeled down to worship God. **7**Then Jesus came close to them. He touched them and told them, "Stand up! Stop being afraid!" **8**When they looked up, the only person whom they saw was Jesus.

9While they were walking down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Do not tell anyone about what you just saw until I, the Son of Man, live again."

10Then, those three apprentices asked Jesus, "The teachers of the Jewish law tell us that the prophet Elijah has to be here before {the Messiah gets here}. Are they right about that? {We ask because we just saw the prophet Elijah}."

11Jesus replied, "{They are right} that the prophet Elijah has to be here and that he will make everything as it should be. **12**Now here is what I want you to know: the prophet Elijah has been here already. However, people did not realize that it was Elijah. Instead, they treated him badly. Further, they are about to hurt me, the Son of Man, in similar ways." **13**After that, the three apprentices realized that Jesus was telling them {that the person he called Elijah was} John the Baptizer.

14When the four of them returned to the large group of people, a man came up to Jesus and bowed down in front of him. **15**He said {to Jesus}, "My lord, please help my son! He is very sick and has seizures. He frequently falls into

fires or bodies of water. **16**I took him {here} to your apprentices {in order that they might cure him}. However, they were not able to do so."

17Jesus responded, "You people who are alive right now do not believe or think properly. It is hard for me to live here with you. It is difficult for me to be patient with you." {Then he said to them,} "Bring the man's son here to me!" **18**Then, Jesus commanded the demon {who was controlling the man's son} to stop {doing so}. The demon obeyed and left him. At that very moment, Jesus cured the man's son.

19Later, the apprentices came to Jesus when they were alone. They asked him, "Why could we not drive out that demon?"

20He answered, "{You could not drive it out} because you trust in God so little. Suppose that you trusted God even a little bit, as little as a tiny mustard seed. Then, you could tell the mountain {we just walked down} to go from one place to another, and it would do so. You could do anything! What I have said is true. **21***[1]* [Now you can only drive out this type of demon by praying and by not eating in order to please God.]"

22Sometime later, the apprentices met together in the region of Galilee. Jesus told them, "Soon somebody will help my enemies arrest me, the Son of Man. **23**They will have people kill me. Then, during the third day after I died, God will make me alive again." {When they heard that, the apprentices} became very sad.

24Later, Jesus and his apprentices went to the city of Capernaum. Some people who collected taxes for the temple came up to Peter. They asked him, "Your instructor pays the tax for the temple, right?"

25Peter answered, "Yes, he does pay it."

Then Peter went into the house {where Jesus was staying}. Before Peter could say anything, Jesus said to him, "Simon, tell me what you think. Who has to pay taxes to the kings who rule in this world? Do their own children have to pay taxes? Or do people whom the kings do not know have to pay taxes?"

26Peter replied, "People whom the kings do not know {have to pay taxes}."

Then Jesus said to him, "So then, the children of kings do not have to pay anything. {That means that we do not have to pay anything either.} **27**However, we do not want to upset the people who collect taxes. So, go to the Sea of Galilee and prepare your fishing tools. Pick up the first fish that you capture. Look in its mouth, and you will see a silver coin {that is worth about twice the tax}. Take the coin to the people who collect taxes to pay for my tax and your tax."

17:21 *[1]*

Chapter 18

1Immediately after that, the apprentices came to Jesus. They asked him, "So then, who will be the most important people in God's heavenly kingdom?"

2Jesus told a young child to come to him. He had the young child stand among them. **3**Then he told them, "You need to change so that you are like young children. That is the only way to participate in God's heavenly kingdom. What I have said is true. **4**So then, consider people who make themselves less important, so that they are as unimportant as this young child. It is those people who are the most important in God's heavenly kingdom. **5**Further, when people, because they are my apprentices, welcome a young child such as this one here, it is the same as welcoming me.

6On the other hand, suppose that an insignificant person who trusts me sinned because of certain people. {God will punish those people so severely that} they would prefer to have someone tie a heavy stone around their necks and drop them into the middle of the ocean. **7**How terrible it will be for people in this world because of the things that cause them to sin! Now those things have to exist. However, how terrible it will be for the people who cause

those things to exist! **8**Suppose that you sinned because you touched something or went somewhere. You should never do that again, even if you have to chop off your hands or your feet to make sure of it! {You should respond that drastically because} it is better for you to truly live without hands or feet than to have both hands and feet but end up in hell. **9**Suppose that you sinned because you looked at something. You should never do that again, even if you have to remove your eyes to make sure of it! {You should respond that drastically because} it is better for you to truly live with only one eye than to have both eyes but end up in hell.

10Do not consider even one insignificant person {who trusts me} to be unimportant. In fact, I want you to know that the angels that protect them are in heaven. They are continually with God my Father, who rules from heaven. **11***[1]* [I, the Son of Man, am here to rescue people who do not worship and obey God.] **12**Think about this situation: A man owns 100 sheep, but one of them wanders away. The man will most certainly leave the 99 other sheep on the side of a hill by themselves and search for the one sheep that wandered away! **13**Now suppose that he found the one sheep that wandered away. He would be much happier about this one sheep than about the 99 other sheep that did not wander away. What I have said is true! **14**God your Father, who rules from heaven, is like that man. He does not want even one unsignificant person {who trusts me} to end up in hell.

15Suppose that fellow believers sin against you. You should visit them and privately tell them what they did wrong. Suppose that they accept what you say. In that case, you have made things right with your fellow believers. **16**However, suppose that those fellow believers do not accept what you say. In that case, bring one or two other believers with you {when you visit them again to tell them what they did wrong}. That way, {you are doing what Moses wrote in the law, that} two or three people must confirm what someone says. **17**Suppose that those fellow believers reject what the people you brought with you say. In that case, tell the whole group of believers {about what happened}. Finally, suppose that those fellow believers reject what the group of believers says. In that case, treat those fellow believers as if they were {unbelieving} non-Jews or people who collect taxes. {Do not treat them as fellow believers any longer.} **18**When you confirm anything here on earth, God will confirm it in heaven. When you nullify anything here on earth, God will nullify it in heaven. What I have said is true! **19**Also, when at least two of you here on earth together request the same thing, God my Father, who rules from heaven, will do whatever it is that you request. What I have said is true! **20**{God will do that} because I am spiritually present whenever at least two or three of you come together as my apprentices."

21After that, Peter came to Jesus and asked, "My Lord, how many times do I need to forgive fellow believers when they keep sinning against me? {Do I need to forgive them} as many as seven times?"

22Jesus replied, "I tell you that you must forgive others 77 times {and more}, not just seven times." **23**Given what I have told you, here is what God's heavenly kingdom is like: a king wished to have his servants pay him what they owed him. **24**So, the king began to find out {what his servants owed him}. Someone led in a servant who owed the king an extremely large sum of money. **25**However, the servant did not have enough money to pay what he owed. So, the king told his men, 'Sell as slaves the servant, the servant's wife, and the servant's children. Also, sell anything that the servant owns. Then, give me the money that you received.'

26After he heard that, the servant knelt down in front of the king. He begged him, 'My lord, please wait patiently. I will eventually pay all the money that I owe.'

27The king pitied his servant. So, he did not require the servant to pay what he owed, and he let him go. **28**When the servant left the king, he noticed another servant who owed him only 100 small coins. He grabbed that servant {around the throat} and began to squeeze it. He demanded, 'Pay me the money that you owe!'

29After he heard that, the other servant knelt down {before him}. He begged him, 'Please wait patiently. I will eventually pay {the money that I owe}.' **30**However, that servant did not want {to wait}. When he left that place, he had someone put the other servant in jail and keep him there until he paid the money that he owed.

31When the rest of the servants learned what that servant had done, they became very sad. They went to the king and told him about everything that the servant had done. **32**After that, the king told that servant to come to him. The king told him, 'You are an evil servant! Since you asked me {to wait patiently}, I did not require you to pay any

of what you owed. **33**I helped you. So, you should have helped the other servant.' **34**Then the king was angry. He had his men arrest and torture that servant until he paid all the money that he owed. **35**Whenever any of you do not completely forgive a fellow believer, God my Father, who rules from heaven, will do to you what {that king did to his servant}."

18:11 *[1]*

Chapter 19

1So, Jesus completed saying those things. Then, he {and his apprentices} left the region of Galilee. They traveled to the region of Judea on the other side of the Jordan River. **2**Large groups of people went with him, and in that place, he cured those {who were sick}.

3Some Pharisees came to Jesus in order to investigate him. They asked, "Does our law allow a husband to divorce his wife whenever he wants to?"

4Jesus replied, "You have read {in the Law that God gave Moses} that when God first created everything, he created people to be male and female. **5**Then God said, 'That is why men{, when they marry,} no longer live with their parents and instead live with their wives. Each husband and wife together become like one person.' **6**Consequently, each husband and wife are not like two different people any longer. Rather, they are like one person. Since that is true, no one should divide people whom God has united."

7The Pharisees responded, "If that is true, why {did Moses instruct us in our law about how to divorce wives}? He required each husband to present his wife with a document that states that he is divorcing her. Then, he can divorce her."

8Jesus answered, "Moses knew that you were unwilling to obey. That is why {in the Law} he permitted you to divorce your wives. However, when God first created everything, that is not what he intended. **9**Now here is what I want to tell you: a man may divorce his wife only if she has had improper sex. When a man divorces his wife for any other reason and marries another woman, he disobeys what God commanded about being sexually faithful to one's spouse. Further, any man who marries a woman whose husband has divorced her also disobeys what God commanded about being sexually faithful to one's spouse."

10Jesus' apprentices responded, "If that is the only basis on which a husband can divorce his wife, it is not beneficial to get married!"

11Jesus replied, "Many people do not accept what you have said. Only people whom God enables {to accept it can do so}. **12**Here is what I mean: Some men are impotent because they were already like that when their mothers gave birth to them. Other men are impotent because people castrated them. Other men are impotent because they chose to live that way in order to serve in God's heavenly kingdom. Anyone who can accept {what I am saying} should accept it."

13After that, some people took young children to Jesus. They wanted him to bless them by touching them and to pray {for them}. However, the apprentices told them to stop. **14**However, Jesus told {the apprentices}, "Allow the young children to come here. Do not stop them! {I say that because} they and people like them are part of God's heavenly kingdom." **15**{After saying that,} Jesus blessed the young children by touching them. Then, he left that place.

16After that, a person came to Jesus! He asked, "Instructor, what is a good thing I can do so that I will live with God forever?"

17Jesus replied, "You should not ask me about what would be a good {thing to do}. God is the only one who is good. Now {to answer your question}, since you desire to truly live, you should do what God has commanded."

18The man replied, “Which {things that God has commanded do you mean}?”

Jesus answered him, “Here are the ones I mean: Do not murder others. Do not be sexually unfaithful to your spouse. Do not steal things. Do not say what is untrue. **19**Treat your parents respectfully. Care for people you know as much as you care for yourself.”

20The young man replied, “I have done each of these things {that God commanded}. What more do I need to do {to truly live}?”

21Jesus answered, “Since you desire to complete {doing what is good}, go {home} and sell what you own. Give {that money} to poor people. {If you do that,} God will reward you in heaven. Then, come with me as my apprentice.”
22After the young man listened to what Jesus said, he felt very sad and left. {He was very sad} because he was rich {and did not want to lose what he owned}.

23After that, Jesus told his apprentices, “It is hard for rich people to participate in God’s heavenly kingdom. What I have said is true. **24**I want you to understand that, so I will repeat it. Large animals like camels cannot fit into very small spaces. However, it is even harder for rich people to participate in God’s kingdom.”

25What Jesus said greatly surprised the apprentices. They said, “So then, it must be that God does not actually rescue anyone!”

26Jesus looked directly at his apprentices. He said, “People cannot rescue themselves. However, God can do anything!”

27After {Jesus said} that, Peter replied, “We left behind everything we had and went with you as your apprentices! So then, how will God reward us?”

28Jesus replied, “Someday God will renew everything that he has made, and I, the Son of Man, will sit down {to rule} from my great throne. When that happens, you too, since you have come with me as my apprentices, will sit down {to rule} from 12 thrones{, one for each of you}. You will decide whether people from the 12 Israelite clans are guilty or innocent. What I have said is true. **29**Some people leave behind houses, siblings, parents, wives, children, or fields. They do that because they want to be my apprentices. God will give those people many times {what they left behind}. Further, he will enable them to live with him forever. **30**{At that time,} many people who are important right now will become unimportant. Many people who are unimportant right now will become important.

Chapter 20

1In fact, here is what God’s heavenly kingdom is like: a man who managed a household left his house in the morning {to go to the town’s open area}. He wanted to hire people to take care of his grape vines. **2**He found some people who agreed to work that day for one coin. Then, he told them to take care of his grape vines. **3**At about nine o’clock in the morning, the man arrived in the town’s open area again. He noticed more people there who wanted to work. **4**He told them, ‘Join the other people who are taking care of my grape vines. I will pay you a fair wage.’
5They agreed to do so. At about noon and at about three o’clock in the afternoon, the man again arrived {in the town’s open area}. He said the same thing {to the people he found there, and they too agreed to take care of his grape vines}. **6**At about five o’clock in the afternoon, the man again arrived {in the town’s open area}. He noticed that there were still people there who wanted to work. He asked them, ‘Why have you been here waiting all day to work?’

7They replied, ‘{We are waiting here} because nobody has hired us.’

Then the man said, ‘Join the other people who are taking care of my grape vines.’ {They agreed to do so.}

8When it was evening, the man who managed the household spoke to the man who supervised the workers. He said, ‘Tell the people who worked today to come here. Starting with the people that I hired latest in the day and

ending with the people that I hired earliest in the day, pay them what they earned.' **9**Then the people who started working at about five o'clock in the afternoon came forward. The supervisor paid one coin to each of them. **10**Then the people who started working first came forward. They expected that the supervisor would pay them more {than that}. However, he paid one coin to each of them also.

11After these workers took their money, they complained about how the man who managed the household was behaving. **12**They said to him, 'These people who started working last worked for just one hour. However, you are treating them as if they worked as much as we have! We worked the most and during the hottest parts of the day.'

13The man who managed the household spoke to one of the workers who was complaining, 'My friend, I am not treating you unfairly. You agreed {to take care of my grape vines} for one coin. **14**I want to pay those who started working last as much as I pay you {who started working first}. So, take what I have paid you and go {home}. **15**Our law allows me to do what I like with what I own. You should not be jealous because I am being generous!'
16Similarly, people who are unimportant right now will become important. People who are important right now will become unimportant."

17Sometime later, Jesus was walking toward the city of Jerusalem. He had his 12 apprentices come with him. No one else was with them. While they were walking, he told them, **18**"We are walking toward the city of Jerusalem! There, somebody will help the ruling priests and the teachers of the Jewish law arrest me, the Son of Man. They will decide that I am guilty and that someone should kill me. **19**They will bring me to the non-Jewish authorities. Those people will make fun of me, beat me, and kill me by nailing me to a cross. Then, during the third day after I died, God will make me alive again."

20After that, Zebedee's wife came to Jesus with her two sons, James and John. She knelt before Jesus and asked him to do something {for her}. **21**Jesus replied, "What do you want {me to do for you}?"

She said, "Please promise me that, when you rule, you will greatly honor my two sons by having one of them sit at your right side and the other one sit at your left side."

22Then Jesus responded by speaking {to her two sons}, "You do not realize what you have actually requested. Are you willing to suffer as I will soon suffer?"

{Her two sons, James and John,} replied, "Yes, we are willing {to suffer}."

23Then Jesus said to them, "You will certainly suffer as I will soon suffer. However, I am not the one who chooses whom to honor by having them sit at my right side and at my left side. Rather, God my Father has already chosen who {will sit in those places}."

24When the ten other apprentices learned {what James and John had requested}, they were very upset with them.
25So, Jesus told his apprentices to come to him. He said to them, "You understand that the people who govern the non-Jews dominate them. Further, important people among them control everyone else. **26**You must not behave like that. Rather, when one of you wants to be important, that person must serve the others. **27**Likewise, when one of you wants to be most important, that person must work for the others. **28**{You should be} like me, the Son of Man. I am here to serve other people. I am not here so that other people will serve me. Indeed, I am going to die in order to free many people {from their sins}."

29After that, Jesus and his apprentices left the city of Jericho{, which they had been visiting}. A large group of people went with them. **30**Now two men who were blind were sitting down next to the path! Someone told them, "Jesus is walking by."

So, they were shouting, "Our Lord, you who are a descendant of King David, please help us!"

31Some people from the large group of people scolded them to keep them quiet. However, the men who were blind yelled even louder, "Our Lord, you who are a descendant of King David, please help us!"

32Then, Jesus stopped walking. He spoke to the two men who were blind. He asked, “How would you like me to help you?”

33They replied, “Our Lord, we want to be able to see!” **34**Jesus pitied them. He touched their eyes. As soon as he did that, they could see. Then, they went with Jesus as his apprentices.

Chapter 21

1After that, Jesus and his apprentices continued to walk toward the city of Jerusalem, and they were getting closer. They were near the Mount of Olives, just outside the village of Bethphage. Then, Jesus told two of his apprentices to go {ahead of them}. **2**He commanded them, “Enter the village of Bethphage, which you see ahead of you. As soon as you enter it, you will see a female donkey that someone has tethered. Her colt will be next to her. Remove the tether {from the female donkey} and lead her and her colt to me here. **3**People might ask you about what you are doing. In that case, tell them, ‘The Lord needs this donkey and colt.’ As soon as you say that, those people will let you have the donkey and colt.” **4**When he said those things, what God said by speaking through one of the prophets came true:

5“Say to the people who live in the city of Jerusalem,

‘Your king will soon be with you!

He is gentle. He sits on a donkey,

on a colt, {which is} a donkey’s offspring.’”

6The two apprentices went {to the village} and did what Jesus had told them to do. **7**They led the donkey and her colt to Jesus. They spread their coats on the animals, and Jesus sat on the coats. **8**Then, {to honor Jesus,} a very large group of people laid their coats down on the path {in front of Jesus}. Other people cut small branches down from trees and laid them down on the path too. **9**Large groups of people walked in front of Jesus and behind him. They were shouting,

“Praise this descendant of King David!

May God bless him who is here to represent the Lord!

May everything in heaven praise him!”

10{How people welcomed Jesus} when he went into the city of Jerusalem unsettled many people who lived there. They asked, “Who is this man?”

11The large groups of people answered, “He is Jesus, from the town of Nazareth, which is in Galilee. He is a man who speaks for God.”

12Later, Jesus visited the temple area. Some people were selling and buying things there. He forced them to leave. Other people were exchanging {regular} money {for special temple money}, and other people were selling small birds {for people to sacrifice}. Jesus flipped over their tables and chairs. **13**Then Jesus told those people, “The prophets wrote in the Scriptures, ‘People should say that my temple is a place where people pray.’ However, you have turned it into ‘a hideout for thieves’!”

14Later, people who could not see and people who could not walk came to Jesus while he was in the temple area. Jesus cured them. **15**The ruling priests and the teachers of the Jewish law saw the amazing things that Jesus did. {They heard} young children in the temple area shouting, “Praise this descendant of King David!” {When they saw and heard those things}, they were very upset.

16They asked him, “Do you realize what those young children are saying {about you}?”

Jesus replied, “Yes, {I realize it}! {What they are doing fits with what} you have read {in the Scriptures}:

‘You have appointed young children and little babies

to honor you.’”

17Then Jesus {and his apprentices} went away from the ruling priests and the teachers of the Jewish law. They left the city of Jerusalem and stayed overnight in the village of Bethany.

18Early the next morning, when Jesus and his apprentices were going back to the city of Jerusalem, Jesus became hungry. **19**He noticed a fig tree near the path. So, he went over to it {to pick some figs to eat}. However, the tree only had leaves. Then Jesus spoke to the fig tree, “May you never again produce figs!” As soon as he said that, the fig tree died.

20What the apprentices had just seen impressed them. They asked, “How did the fig tree die as soon as you spoke to it?”

21Jesus replied, “Suppose that you trusted {God} and were not unsure {about what he can do}. Then, you could do what I did to the fig tree. Even more, you could tell the hill we are near to leave {this place} and fall into the ocean, and it would happen. What I have said is true. **22**Further, suppose that you trust God to do whatever you ask when you are praying. Then, he will do it for you.”

23Then Jesus visited the temple area, and he was instructing people there. The ruling priests and the Jewish leaders came to him. They asked, “In what way did someone authorize you to do what you have done? Who was it that authorized you {to do these things}?”

24Jesus replied, “I too will ask you a question. When you answer it, I too will answer your question about the way in which someone authorized me to do what I have done. **25**Who authorized John the Baptizer to baptize people? Did God {authorize him} from heaven, or did people {authorize him}?”

Then the ruling priests and the Jewish leaders told each other, “Suppose that we answer that {God authorized John} from heaven. Then, he will tell us that we should have listened to John. **26**On the other hand, suppose that we answer that people {authorized John}. Then, since the large group of people believe that John spoke for God, we are afraid of how they would react.”

27So, they answered Jesus, “We do not know {who authorized John}.”

Jesus responded, “Because you did not answer my question, I will not tell you in what way someone authorized me to do what I have done. **28**Think about this situation: There was a man with two children. He went to the older one and told him, ‘My child, go {to where my grape vines are} and take care of them today.’

29His child replied, ‘I will not {do that}!’ However, later he regretted {what he had said}. He took care of the grape vines after all.

30After {speaking with the older child}, the man went to the younger child and told him to take care of his grape vines.

His child replied, ‘I will {do that}, my father!’ However, he did not take care of the grape vines.

31Which of these two children did what their father wanted?”

The ruling priests and the Jewish leaders answered, “The older one.”

Jesus replied, “Prostitutes and people who collect taxes are participating in God’s kingdom before you are. What I have said is true. **32**{I say that} because, when John the Baptizer was with you, he did what was right. However, you did not trust him. In contrast, prostitutes and people who collect taxes did trust him. When you realized {that even they trusted John}, you did not regret how you were acting and trust him after all.

33I will tell you another story. A man who managed a household planted a vineyard. He built a fence around it {in order to protect it}. He made a stone tank {to collect the grape juice that they would press out of the grapes}. He also built a tower {for someone to sit in to guard his vineyard}. He rented the vineyard to some people who would take care of it, and he left to travel to a different country. **34**When it was almost time to harvest the grapes, the man told some of his servants to go to the people who were taking care of the vineyard. He wanted them to give him his share of the grapes {that the vineyard had produced}. **35**However, the people who were taking care of the vineyard grabbed the man's servants. They beat up some servants. They executed other servants. They {killed} other servants by throwing stones at them. **36**After that, the man told an even greater number of his servants to go {to the people who were taking care of the vineyard}. However, those people treated these servants just as they had treated the other servants. **37**Finally, the man told his own son to go to them. He thought that they would treat his son well {and give him his share of the grapes}.

38However, when the people who were taking care of the vineyard saw the man's son arriving, they told each other, 'This man is the one who will inherit the vineyard. We should kill him, and then we can take the vineyard for ourselves.' **39**So, they grabbed the man's son and dragged him outside the vineyard. Then, they killed him. **40**After that, the man who owned the vineyard came back. How do you think he treated the people who were taking care of the vineyard?"

41The ruling priests and the Jewish leaders replied, "He would kill those evil people! Then, he would rent the vineyard to other people who would give him his share of the grapes when it was time to harvest them."

42Jesus responded, "{What I have said fits with what} you have read in the Scriptures:

'The people who were constructing a building refused to use a certain stone.

However, that stone is now the most important one in the building.

The Lord {God} did that,

and we think it is amazing.'

43So then, here is what I want to tell you: God will stop you from participating in his kingdom. He will have a different group of people participate in his kingdom. They will do what he wants those in his kingdom to do. **44**Any people who trip over the stone {that is now the most important one} will injure themselves. Further, that stone will squash anyone on whom it drops."

45The ruling priests and the Pharisees listened to the stories that Jesus told. They realized that Jesus was telling {the stories} about them. **46**They wanted to arrest Jesus. However, since the large groups of people believed that Jesus spoke for God, they were afraid of how those people would react. {So, they did not arrest Jesus at that time.}

Chapter 22

1Then Jesus used more stories to teach the chief priests and the Jewish leaders. He said, **2**"Here is what God's heavenly kingdom is like: a king prepared a banquet to celebrate his son, who was getting married. **3**{When it was time for the banquet,} the king told his servants to summon the people that he had asked to attend the banquet. However, those people refused to attend {the banquet}. **4**So, the king told different servants to summon again the people he had asked to attend {the banquet}. He instructed them to say that the meal was ready, that his servants had prepared special cows to eat and everything else, and that they should attend the banquet. **5**However, the people {that the king had asked to attend the banquet} ignored his servants. Instead, some of them left for other places, like their farms or workplaces. **6**Other {people that the king had asked to attend the banquet} grabbed his servants. They abused some of them, and they killed some of them. **7**So, the king was very upset. He told his soldiers to kill the people who killed his servants and to burn down their town. **8**After that, the king told his servants that, although the feast for his son's wedding was ready, the people he had asked to attend did not

deserve to be there. **9**So, {he told his servants} to walk to the intersections of the main roads and to tell the people they encountered to attend the feast for his son's wedding. **10**So, his servants walked to {the intersections of} the roads. They brought all the people they encountered, whether those people did what was right or did what was wrong. Then, the wedding hall was full of people who were feasting. **11**The king went into the hall to see the people who were feasting. {While he was} there, he noticed that one person did not have on the proper clothing for a wedding. **12**The king called him friend and told him that he should not have attended without having on the proper clothing for a wedding. The person had nothing to say in response. **13**After that, the king told his servants to tie the person up and cast him out {of the wedding hall}. {He told them to punish him} in a dark place, where people will cry and sorrowfully grind their teeth. **14**As that story illustrates, God summons many people {to participate in his kingdom}. However, he only chooses a few of them {to do so}."

15After {Jesus said those things}, the Pharisees left {that place}. They started to plan how they could cause him to make a mistake in what he said. **16**So, the Pharisees told some of their apprentices and some people who supported King Herod to go to Jesus and say to him, "Our instructor, we realize that you say what is true. Further, you truthfully instruct people in what God wants them to do. You do not pay attention to how important or powerful people are. So, you do not care about what other people think. **17**So, please tell us how you answer this question: Does our law allow us to pay taxes to the Roman government, or {does it} not {allow that}?"

18However, Jesus knew that they were trying to harm him. So, he replied, "You are trying to make me say something wrong. You pretend to respect me, but you really do not! **19**Hand me one of the coins that you use to pay taxes." Someone handed him a Roman coin.

20Then Jesus asked, "Whose picture and name are on this coin?"

21They replied, "{It is} Caesar's {picture and name}."

Then Jesus said, "In that case, give to the Roman government what belongs to it, and give to God what belongs to him." **22**What Jesus said impressed the Pharisees' apprentices and the people who supported King Herod. They left where he was.

23Later that day, some Sadducees came to Jesus. They are a Jewish group that does not believe that God will make people who have died alive again. They asked Jesus, **24**"Our instructor, Moses wrote {in the Scriptures} about what should happen when a man with {a wife but} no children dies. When that happens, the man's brother should marry the dead man's wife. When they have a child, they should consider it to be the child of the dead man. **25**So, {consider this situation}: seven brothers lived here. One brother got married, but then he died before he had children. So, one of his brothers married his widow. **26**The same thing happened to the second brother, the third brother, and the other four brothers. {They each married the widow but died before they had children.} **27**Finally, the widow died. **28**So then, of those seven brothers, whose wife will she be when God makes people alive again? {We ask} because she got married to all seven of them {at different times}."

29Jesus replied, "You do not realize what the Scriptures mean or how powerful God is. So, you believe what is wrong. **30**Here is what I mean: after God makes people alive again, they will not get married. Instead, they will be like angels who dwell in heaven {and do not get married}. **31**Now I will speak about whether God makes people who have died alive again. You have read in the Scriptures that God said to you, **32**'I am the God whom Abraham worships, the God whom Isaac worships, and the God whom Jacob worships.' It is living people who worship God, not dead people. {So, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who all have died, must be alive again!}" **33**The things that Jesus taught impressed the large groups of people.

34The Pharisees heard that Jesus answered so well that the Sadducees could not respond. So, the Pharisees met together {and went to where Jesus was}. **35**Then, one of the Pharisees, who was an expert in the Jewish law, decided to investigate Jesus. He asked him, **36**"Instructor, which of the laws that God gave us is the most important?"

37Jesus replied: “We must love the Lord, the God whom we worship, with everything that we desire, everything that we do, and everything that we think. **38**That is the most important law. **39**The next most important law is similar. It is that we must care for people we know as much as we care for ourselves. **40**All the parts of the Scriptures depend upon these two laws.”

41While those Pharisees were still all together {near Jesus}, he asked them, **42**“I want you to answer a question about the Messiah. Who is his ancestor?”

They replied, “His ancestor is King David.”

43Jesus replied, “In that case, why did the Holy Spirit cause King David to write that the Messiah was his Lord? {People do not describe their descendants as their lords. However,} King David wrote **44**that the Lord God said to David’s Lord,

‘Rule with me

while I defeat all of your enemies!’

45So then, since King David wrote that the Messiah was his Lord, how is it possible for King David to be his ancestor?” **46**The people who were there could not answer his question. In fact, after that nobody was bold enough to ask him more questions.

Chapter 23

1After that, Jesus said to the large groups of people and to his apprentices, **2**“The Pharisees and the teachers of the Jewish law instruct you as Moses did. **3**So then, you should do whatever they tell you {to do}. However, they themselves do not do what they tell {you to do}. So, do not act as they do. **4**They tell people to do many things that are difficult. However, they do not do anything to help those people. **5**Whenever they do anything, they do it so that people praise them for it. For example, when they tie boxes containing Scripture on their foreheads and arms, they make sure the boxes are large. They make the hems on their robes very long. **6**They greatly enjoy sitting in the places for important people when they attend feasts or go to the Jewish meeting places. **7**{They greatly enjoy it when} people greet them {respectfully} in the open areas of towns and speak to them as important teachers. **8**However, you have only one teacher, me. Also, you are all fellow believers. So then, you should not allow people to speak to you as important teachers. **9**Further, you have one Father, the one who rules from heaven. So, you should not honor people here on earth by using the title ‘my father’ for them. **10**You have one instructor, I, who am the Messiah. So, you should not allow people to speak to you as their instructors. **11**The most important person in your group must serve the others. **12**God will cause people who think they are important to be unimportant. God will cause people who think they are unimportant to be important.

13You Pharisees and teachers of the Jewish law say that you obey God, but you really do not! You keep people from participating in God’s heavenly kingdom. In fact, you yourselves do not participate in the kingdom. Further, you prevent people who want to participate in it from doing so. How terrible it will be for you!

14[You Pharisees and teachers of the Jewish law say that you obey God, but you really do not! You steal the property of women whose husbands have died. To make other people think that you are righteous, you pray for a long time. How terrible it will be for you! God will punish you very severely.]

15You Pharisees and teachers of the Jewish law say that you obey God, but you really do not! You travel to many places to convert even one person to the Jewish religion. However, once you have done that, you cause that person to deserve to end up in hell as much as you do. How terrible it will be for you!

16You do not know what you should be teaching. You say that when people have the temple guarantee what they promise, they do not need to do what they promised. However, you say that when they have the precious metal in

the temple guarantee what they promise, they must do what they promised. How terrible it will be for you! **17**You do not understand what is true! You should realize that the precious metal {in the temple} is less important than the temple itself. It is the temple that makes the precious metal holy. **18**Similarly, {you say that} when people have the altar guarantee what they promise, they do not need to do what they promised. However, you say that when they have the sacrifice on the altar guarantee what they promise, they must do what they promised. **19**You do not understand what is true! You should realize that the sacrifice {on the altar} is less important than the altar itself. It is the altar that makes the sacrifice holy. **20**So, when people have the altar guarantee what they promise, they are having both it and every sacrifice on it guarantee what they promise. **21**Further, when people have the temple guarantee what they promise, they are having both it and God, who dwells there, guarantee what they promise. **22**When people have heaven guarantee what they promise, they are also having God's throne and God himself, who rules from that throne, guarantee what they promise.

23You Pharisees and teachers of the Jewish law say that you obey God, but you really do not! You give one tenth of even your herbs and spices to God. However, you fail to obey the more important commands that God gave: to do what is right, to be merciful to others, and to be faithful to God. You should do these things as well as giving a tenth of everything to God. How terrible it will be for you! **24**You do not know what you should be teaching. You are like people who filter small flies out of their drinks without noticing large animals like camels in the same drinks!

25You Pharisees and teachers of the Jewish law say that you obey God, but you really do not! You seem to do what is right, just like dishes that you have washed on the outside. However, really you want what other people have and do not control yourselves, just like dishes that are still dirty on the inside. How terrible it will be for you! **26**You Pharisees do not understand what is true! You should focus on doing what is right. Once you do that, you will also seem to do what is right, just like dishes that are clean on both the inside and the outside.

27You Pharisees and teachers of the Jewish law say that you obey God, but you really do not! I compare you to graves that people have painted white. They look good, but they are dirty and have many corpses in them. How terrible it will be for you! **28**Similarly, you seem to do what is right, but really you usually do what is wrong while pretending to do what is right.

29You Pharisees and teachers of the Jewish law say that you obey God, but you really do not! How terrible it will be for you! You construct monuments to honor the people who spoke for God long ago. You decorate the graves of people who did what was right. **30**You declare that, had you been alive when your ancestors were, you would not have helped them murder the people who spoke for God. **31**When you declare that, you admit that you are descendants of and similar to the people who did murder those who spoke for God. **32**As for you, think about what will happen if you do what your ancestors did.

33You are sneaky and dangerous like poisonous snakes! You will not avoid God punishing you in hell. **34**Since you are like that, I will have people who speak for God, people who are wise, and teachers of the Jewish law go to you! You will murder some of them and kill some of them by nailing them to crosses. You will beat some of them in your meeting places. You will chase them from one town to another. **35**So, God will consider you to be guilty for murdering everyone who did what was right here on earth but whom someone murdered. I am referring to {Adam's son} Abel, who did what was right, and Barachiah's son Zechariah, whom your ancestors murdered in the temple area, and everyone in between. **36**God will consider {you people who live in} this time period to be guilty of all those murders. What I have said is true.

37Oh, people of Jerusalem! You killed the people who spoke for God long ago. Then you killed others whom God sent to you. You killed them by throwing stones at them. Many times I have wanted to bring you together {to protect you}, as a chicken brings her offspring together under her wings. However, you did not want me to do that. **38**Your city will become a place where no one lives! **39**In fact, here is what I want to tell you: the next time you see me, you will be saying, 'May God bless him who is here to represent the Lord!'"

Chapter 24

1After that, Jesus left the temple area. As he was walking, his apprentices came to him and pointed out the impressive structures that were in the temple area. **2**He responded, “Look at all these structures! Enemies will completely destroy them. They will not leave anything standing. What I have said is true.”

3Later, Jesus sat down on top of the Mount of Olives. His apprentices came to him. No one else was with them. They asked him, “Please explain to us when what you have described will happen. Also, {please explain to us} how we can tell when you are going to return {to this world} and when this current time period will end.”

4Jesus replied, “Make sure that nobody deceives you! **5**{I say that} because many people will meet you and say that God has authorized them as he has authorized me. They will say that they are the Messiah. {By doing that,} they will deceive many people. **6**Whenever people tell you about wars that are happening and about wars that could happen, make sure that you are not afraid. Things like that have to happen. However, the current time period will not yet end. **7**Further, groups of people will attack each other. Many people will not have enough food to eat, and earthquakes will happen in many places. **8**Those events are like the first pains a pregnant woman feels when she is going to birth. They are bad, but many more bad things will still happen after them.

9While those things are happening, people will hurt you and kill you. Indeed, because you are my apprentices, many groups of people will be hostile to you. **10**Also while those things are happening, many people will stop believing {in me}. They will have people arrest their fellow believers. They will be hostile to each other. **11**There will be many people who lie when they claim to speak for God. They will deceive many people. **12**Since more and more people will do what is wrong, many people will stop caring {for each other}. **13**However, if you persevere {in being my apprentices} while people harm you, God will rescue you. **14**You, my apprentices, will proclaim the good news about God’s kingdom throughout this world. That way, you will tell every group of people {about me}. After that, the current time period will end.

15At some point, you will realize that the detestable thing that destroys is in the temple building. Daniel, who spoke for God, already referred to this detestable thing.” (So, anyone who has read what Daniel wrote should know what Jesus meant.) **16**“When you realize that, those of you who are in the region of Judea should escape to the hilly areas nearby. **17**Those of you who are outside your homes should not go back into your homes to get anything. **18**Those of you who are working in fields should not go back home to get your coats. **19**When what I have described happens, how terrible it will be for pregnant women and for nursing mothers! **20**Ask God to keep you from having to escape during the winter season or on the Jewish day of rest{, when it is difficult to travel}. **21**{I say that} because people will suffer very severely when what I have described happens. People have not suffered that severely since God created the world up to now, and no one will ever suffer that severely again. **22**Suppose that God were to allow what I have described to continue. In that case, nobody would survive. However, because of the people whom he has chosen {to belong to him}, God will not allow what I have described to continue.

23-24 While those things are happening, there will be people who lie when they claim to be the Messiah or to speak for God. They will perform amazing miracles. They will try to deceive the people whom God has chosen {to belong to him}, and they will almost succeed in doing so. Therefore, when people tell you that the Messiah is here or there, do not trust {what they say}. **25**I have warned you about this before it happens! **26**So, suppose someone says to you that the Messiah is in a place where no one lives. Do not go there. {Similarly, suppose that someone says to you that the Messiah} is in some private rooms. Do not trust what that person says. **27**Here is why I say that: lightning lights up the sky from one side to the other{, and everyone can see it}. Similarly, when I, the Son of Man, return {to this world}, {everyone will see it}. **28**Carrion birds assemble wherever there is a dead body.

29Once people suffer in the ways I have described, immediately God will cause the sun to become dark. The moon will not shine. Stars will drop down from the sky. God will disrupt the angels in heaven. **30**After that, people will see something in the sky that shows that I, the Son of Man, {am about to act}. In response, many groups of people here on earth will grieve. They will see me, the Son of Man, arriving by means of clouds. I will be powerful and very

great. **31**I will {have an angel} sound a loud trumpet. I will tell my angels to collect the people whom I have chosen. They will collect them from every place that exists.

32Listen to this story about how fig trees grow. Whenever they begin to produce new branches and leaves, you can tell that it is almost the summer season. **33**Similarly, whenever you realize that what I have described is happening, you can tell that I will act very soon. **34**Most of the people who are alive right now will still be alive when what I have described happens. What I have said is true. **35**Everything that God has created will eventually change or disappear. However, what I have said will never change or disappear.

36However, as for when this current time period will end, no human being knows that. The angels who dwell in heaven do not know that. Even I, the Son, do not know that. In fact, only God my Father knows that. **37**So, when I, the Son of Man, return {to this world}, it will be like what happened when Noah was alive {long ago}. **38-39**Here is what I mean: at the time before God flooded the whole world, people did not realize what was going to happen. They did {normal things, like} eating, drinking, and getting married. They did those things right up to the moment when Noah went into the big boat {that he had built}. Then, God flooded the whole world and destroyed everyone {who was not in the boat}. That is what it will be like when I, the Son of Man, return {to this world}. **40**Consider what will happen to two men working on a farm when I return. God will bring one man {to be with him}. He will leave the other man behind {to punish him}. **41**Consider what will happen to two women using a stone to prepare grain. God will bring one woman {to be with him}. He will leave the other woman behind {to punish her}.

42So then, you cannot know at what moment I, your Lord, will return {to this world}. Because of that, you need to be ready {at all times}. **43**Now learn from this situation: Suppose that a man who managed a household learned at what time a robber was going to steal from the house. In that case, he would be ready for the robber. He would prevent him from stealing from the house. **44**So then, since I, the Son of Man, will return {to this world} when you do not expect me, you too need to be ready.

45To further understand what I am saying, consider an important servant. His master has put him in charge of all the other servants, and he needs to feed them at the proper times. He should be trustworthy and act wisely. **46**When his master returns, it will be very good for that servant if his master learns that he has done what he put him in charge to do. **47**The master will put that servant in charge of everything that he owns. What I have said is true. **48**However, suppose that the servant were wicked. Then, he would think that his master was staying away for a long time. **49**So, he would start hitting the other servants. He would feast with drunk people. **50**However, then his master would return at a time when the servant does not expect him. **51**The master will punish that servant severely. He will send him where he punishes people who pretend to obey but really do not. There, people will cry and sorrowfully grind their teeth.

Chapter 25

1Here is what God's heavenly kingdom will be like at that time: Ten young women each took an oil lamp and prepared to escort a bridegroom {to his wedding celebration}. **2**As for those young women, five of them were foolish, and the other five of them were wise. **3**Here is how five of them were foolish: they each took an oil lamp, but they did not take any extra oil {for their lamps}. **4**In contrast, here is how five of them were wise: they each took an oil lamp and also some extra oil {for their lamps}. **5**Now the bridegroom did not arrive for a long time. So, all the young women became drowsy and then fell asleep. **6**Later, sometime during the night, someone shouted, 'The bridegroom is almost here! You must escort him {to his wedding celebration}!' **7**When they heard that, all the young women woke up and prepared their oil lamps.

8The foolish young women said to the wise young women, 'Our oil lamps no longer shine brightly. So, please share your oil with us.'

9The wise young women replied, ‘{We will not share our oil, because} there is not enough for all of us. You should find someone from whom to buy oil for yourselves.’ **10**So, the foolish young women left to buy oil. While they were gone, the bridegroom arrived. The wise young women, who were ready {to escort him}, went with him to the wedding hall. Then, people closed its doors.

11Later, the other young women also arrived {at the wedding hall}. They asked {the bridegroom}, ‘Sir, please open the door so that we can come in!’

12The bridegroom replied, ‘{I will not open the door, because} I do not recognize you. What I have said is true!’ **13**So then, you cannot know at what moment {I will return to this world}. Because of that, you need to be ready {at all times}.

14Even further, {here is what God’s heavenly kingdom} is like: a man decided to travel to a different country. So, he summoned his servants and put them in charge of what he owned. **15**He gave as much money to each servant as each one could manage. He gave five bags of money to one servant. He gave two bags of money to another servant. He gave one bag of money to another servant. As soon as he did that, he traveled to a different country. **16**Then, the servant who had five bags of money went to invest the money. He made five more bags of money. **17**Similarly, the servant who had two bags of money {invested the money}. He made two more bags of money. **18**However, the servant who had one bag of money went to bury it in the ground {to keep it safe}.

19Much later, the servants’ master returned. He wanted to know what they had done with the bags of money. **20**So, the servant who had five bags of money went to him. He brought {them and} the five more bags of money {that he had made}. He said, ‘Master, you gave me five bags of money. I have made five more bags of money!’

21His master replied, ‘I approve of what you have done. You are a trustworthy servant who does what is right! You were trustworthy when I put you in charge of only some money. Now I will put you in charge of many important things. Enjoy what I have with me!’

22Then, the servant who had two bags of money went to him too. He said, ‘Master, you gave me two bags of money. I have made two more bags of money!’

23His master replied, ‘I approve of what you have done. You are a trustworthy servant who does what is right! You were trustworthy when I put you in charge of only some money. Now I will put you in charge of many important things. Enjoy what I have with me!’

24Then, the servant who had one bag of money went to him too. He said, ‘Master, I realized that you are a demanding person. You are like a farmer who harvests crops that he did not plant. **25**So, because I feared you, I went to bury your bag of money in the ground {to keep it safe}. Now I am giving you back your money!’

26His master replied, ‘You are an evil servant who refuses to work! You claim that you realized that I am like a farmer who harvests crops that he did not plant. **27**If that were true about me, you should have given the bag of money to people who lend money. Then, when I returned, I would have gotten it back plus the interest it earned.’

28So {the master said to his other servants,} ‘Take the bag of money from him! Give it to the servant who has ten bags of money. **29**{I command that} because people give more to those who already have something. They will have many things. In contrast, people take everything from those who already have very little. **30**Now {to punish} this useless servant, cast him out into a dark place, where people will cry and sorrowfully grind their teeth.’

31When I, the Son of Man, return {to this world} with all the angels, I will be very glorious. At that time, I will sit down {to rule} from my great throne. **32**Then all groups of people will assemble in front of me. I will divide them into two groups, as a sheepherder divides his animals into a group of sheep and a group of goats. **33**I will have some people, who are like sheep, go to the area to my right {to honor them}. I will have the other people, who are like goats, go to the area to my left {to shame them}. **34**After that, I, the king, will tell the people in the area to my right, ‘You are people whom God my Father has blessed. Come with me! God will enable you to participate in the

kingdom that he set up for you when he created everything. **35**{You will do that} because you fed me when I was hungry. You gave me water when I was thirsty. You welcomed me when I arrived from a different place. **36**You gave me clothes when I did not have enough to wear. You took care of me when I was ill. You visited me when I was in jail.'

37After that, the people who did what was right will reply, 'Lord, we do not remember feeding you when you were hungry. {We do not remember} giving you water when you were thirsty. **38**We do not remember welcoming you even though you were from a different place. {We do not remember} giving you clothes when you did not have enough to wear. **39**We do not remember visiting you when you were ill or in jail.'

40I, the king, will respond, 'Whenever you do something to help an insignificant fellow believer, it is as if you did it to help me. What I have said is true.'

41After that, I will tell the people in the area to my left, 'You are people whom God has cursed. Leave me! {I send you} to hell, which God set up for Satan and his demons. **42**{You will go there} because you did not feed me when I was hungry. You did not give me water when I was thirsty. **43**You did not welcome me when I arrived from a different place. You did not give me clothes when I did not have enough to wear. You did not take care of me when I was ill and in jail.'

44After that, those people will reply, 'Lord, we do not remember failing to help you when you were hungry or thirsty or came from a different place or did not have enough to wear or were ill or in jail.'

45He will reply, 'I tell you truly that you did not do for me whatever you did not do for even the least important one among these people of mine.'

46As for those people {who did what was wrong}, God will punish them forever. In contrast, the people who did what was right will live with God forever."

Chapter 26

1So, Jesus completed saying all those things. Then, he told his apprentices, **2**"As you know, two days from now, the Passover festival will begin. At that time, somebody will help the authorities arrest me, the Son of Man. They will have people kill me by nailing me to a cross."

3At that time, the ruling priests and the Jewish leaders assembled outside the house of the ruling priest whose name was Caiaphas. **4**They started to plan a clever way to arrest Jesus and have others execute him. **5**However, they agreed that they would not act during the Passover festival. Otherwise, the people who were there in Jerusalem might riot.

6One time, Jesus {and his apprentices} were in the village of Bethany. They were in the home of Simon, who used to have a skin disease. **7**While Jesus was feasting {there}, a woman came to him. She brought with her a stone jar that contained a valuable, fragrant ointment. She poured the ointment on Jesus' head. **8**When the apprentices noticed {what the woman had done}, they were very upset. They declared, "She wasted {the valuable ointment}! **9**She could have sold it for a lot of money! Then, she could have given {that money} to poor people."

10However, Jesus realized {what they were saying}. He told them, "Do not bother this woman! {I say that} because what she did to me was right. **11**There will always be poor people with you. {So, you can help them whenever you want to}. However, I will not always be with you. **12**When she poured this ointment on me, she was getting me ready for when someone buries me. **13**In every place where my apprentices proclaim the good news, they will also tell what this woman just did. That way, people remember her. What I have said is true."

14After that, one of Jesus' 12 representatives visited the ruling priests. This man's name was Judas Iscariot. **15**He said to them, "Suppose that I help you arrest Jesus. How much money would you pay me?" {In response,} they

offered Judas 30 silver coins. **16**From that moment on, Judas tried to find a good time to help {the ruling priests} arrest Jesus.

17During the first day of the Celebration of Unleavened Bread, the apprentices came to Jesus. They asked him, "Where should we set up the meal for the Passover celebration?"

18Jesus told them, "Enter the city of Jerusalem and find a certain man. Tell him, 'Our instructor says that something important is about to happen to him. He wants to eat the meal for the Passover celebration with us, his apprentices, in your home.'" **19**The apprentices did what Jesus told them to do. They {went to that man's house and} set up the meal for the Passover celebration.

20When it was evening, Jesus and his 12 representatives began to feast. **21**As they ate, Jesus told them, "One of you is going to help {my enemies} arrest me. What I have said is true."

22The apprentices became very sad. Every one of them told Jesus, "Lord, I will not do that!"

23Jesus replied, "The one who will help {my enemies} arrest me is eating food here with me. **24**I, the Son of Man, will die. That is what you can read in the Scriptures about me. Nevertheless, how terrible it will be for the man who helps {my enemies} arrest me, the Son of Man. In fact, that man would be better off if he had never existed."

25Judas, the one who was going to help {his enemies} arrest him, replied, "Teacher, I will not do that!"

Jesus replied, "Yes you will."

26As they ate, Jesus picked up a loaf of bread. He thanked God {for the loaf of bread}. Then, he tore it into pieces and handed the pieces to the apprentices {to eat}. He said, "This {bread} is my body. Receive it and eat it." **27**Then Jesus picked up a cup {of wine}. He thanked God {for the wine}. Then, he handed {the cup of wine} to the apprentices. He said, "All of you must drink wine from this cup. **28**This wine is my blood, which inaugurates the agreement {God is making with you}. My blood will flow from my body {when my enemies kill me}. That way, God will forgive the sins of many people. **29**Here is what I want to tell you: From this moment on, I will not drink any more wine until the time when I drink it again with you when we participate in God my Father's kingdom."

30After they sang a song praising God, Jesus and his apprentices walked to the Mount of Olives.

31After that, Jesus told them, "{God had Zechariah} write in the Scriptures,

'I will kill the one who is like a shepherd.

Then, the people who are like sheep in his flock will flee.'

So, tonight all of you will reject me! **32**However, once God has made me alive again, I will go ahead of you to the region of Galilee {and meet you there}."

33Peter replied, "Suppose that everyone else rejects you. Despite that, I will never reject you!"

34Jesus replied, "Tonight before male chickens crow {at dawn}, you will say three times that you are not my apprentice! What I have said is true."

35Peter told him, "I will always say that I am your apprentice, even if I die with you because of that!" The rest of the apprentices said the same thing.

36After that, Jesus and his apprentices walked to a place whose name was Gethsemane. He told the apprentices, "Stay here. I will walk over there and pray {to God}." **37**Jesus had Peter and Zebedee's two sons{, James and John}, go with him. Then, Jesus started to become very sad and upset. **38**He told those three apprentices, "I am so sad that I feel like I am dying. Stay here and stay awake with me!" **39**After saying that, Jesus walked a little further. Then, he

kneeled down to pray. He said, “God my Father, if there is any way to do so, please prevent me from suffering terribly. However, please do what you want to do, not what I want you to do.”

40Then he returned to the three apprentices. He discovered that they were asleep. He {woke them up} and rebuked Peter, “It disappoints me that you {men} could not stay awake with me for just a short time! **41**You want to do what I say, but you are not strong enough. Stay awake and pray! That way, nothing can convince you to sin.” **42**Then Jesus walked a short distance away a second time. He prayed, “God my Father, there may be no way to prevent me from suffering terribly. So, please do what you want to do!”

43Then he returned a second time {to the three apprentices}. He discovered that they, because they were so sleepy, had fallen asleep again. **44**So, Jesus walked a short distance away a third time. He prayed again what he had prayed before. **45**Then he returned to the three apprentices. He {woke them up and} rebuked them, “It disappoints me that you continue to sleep! The time {when I will suffer} is about to begin! Someone is about to help sinful people arrest me, the Son of Man. **46**Stand up! We are going to leave {this place}. The person who is helping {my enemies} arrest me has arrived!”

47While Jesus was still talking {to the three apprentices}, Judas arrived. He was one of the 12 men whom Jesus had chosen to represent him. {He brought} with him a large group of people carrying swords and clubs. The ruling priests and the Jewish leaders had sent them {to arrest Jesus}. **48**Previously, Judas, who was helping {Jesus’ enemies} arrest him, told the group of people how they would know which man was Jesus. He instructed them, “The man you should arrest is the one whom I will greet affectionately.”

49As soon as he arrived, Judas went to Jesus and said, “Greetings, Teacher!” Then he greeted Jesus affectionately.

50Jesus told him, “My friend, I know why you are really here.”

After that, the large group of people arrested Jesus. **51**Then one of the men who were with Jesus pulled his sword {out of its sheath}! He attacked a man who served the ruling priest, but he {only} cut off that man’s ear. **52**After that, Jesus told him, “Put your sword back in its sheath! {I say that} because someone will kill with a sword every person who tries to kill another person with a sword. **53**You should realize that I could ask God my Father to protect me, and he would immediately send more than 12 armies of angels to do so! **54**{However, if I did that,} then what people wrote in the Scriptures would not come true. They wrote that what is happening to me has to occur.”

55At that time, Jesus told the groups of people {who were arresting him}, “You did not need to treat me like a dangerous bandit by arming yourselves with swords and clubs to arrest me. Each day I was peacefully instructing people in the temple area. You did not arrest me then! **56**However, as all these things have happened, what the prophets wrote has come true.” After that, all of Jesus’ apprentices deserted him and ran away.

57The people who had arrested Jesus took him to {the house where} Caiaphas, the ruling priest{, lived}. The teachers of the Jewish law and the Jewish leaders had {already} assembled there. **58**Peter followed Jesus, but he stayed a safe distance away. He went into the area just outside {the house where} the ruling priest {lived}. He sat there with the servants. That way, he could see what was going to happen.

59The ruling priests and all {the rest of} the Jewish council tried to find {people who would say} what was untrue about Jesus. That way, they could have {the Roman authorities} execute him. **60**However, even though many people said what was untrue about Jesus, the Jewish council did not find {anything that they could tell the Roman authorities about}. Finally, two people came forward. **61**They said, “This man said that he could tear down God’s temple and construct it again within three days.”

62Then the ruling priest stood up. He asked Jesus, “Are you going to reply? How do you respond to what these people have said about you?” **63**Despite that, Jesus kept quiet. Then the ruling priest told him, “I want you to have the only real God guarantee that you will say truthfully whether you are the Messiah, God’s Son.”

64Jesus replied, “What you have called me is right. In fact, here is what I want to tell you: From this time on, you will
see me, the Son of Man, ruling powerfully with God. {You will see me} arriving by means of clouds.”

65When he heard that, the ruling priest was so upset that he ripped his outer garments. He said, “This man has
insulted God! We certainly do not need anyone else to say anything about him. You all just heard him insult God!
66What should we decide to do?”

The Jewish council replied, “Someone should execute him because of what he has said!”

67After that, some of the people there spit in Jesus’ face {to insult him}. They struck him {with their fists}. They
slapped him **68**and demanded, “{You who claim to be the} Messiah, prove to us that you speak for God! Name the
people who just struck you!”

69Meanwhile, Peter was sitting down in the area just outside the {ruling priest’s} house. A female servant came up
to him and said, “{I can tell that} you were an apprentice of Jesus, that man from the region of Galilee.”

70However, while everyone there was listening, he told them that he was not Jesus’ apprentice. He said, “I do not
understand what you are talking about!”

71Then Peter walked to the entrance {into the area just outside the house}. Another female servant noticed him
there. She told the people who were standing nearby, “This man was an apprentice of Jesus, that man from the
town of Nazareth.”

72Peter again said that he was not Jesus’ apprentice. He solemnly promised, “I have never met that man!”

73A little later, some people who were there came up to Peter. They told him, “When you talk, you sound like {you
are from where Jesus is from}. So, you must really be one of his apprentices.”

74After they said that, Peter asked God to punish him if he was lying. Then he solemnly promised, “I have never
met that man!” As soon as he said that, a male chicken crowed.

75Then Peter remembered what Jesus had told him. He had said, “Before male chickens crow {at dawn}, you will say
three times that you are not my apprentice.” Peter left {the area just outside the ruling priest’s house} and cried
very sorrowfully.

Chapter 27

1When it was morning, all the ruling priests and the Jewish leaders planned how they could have someone execute
Jesus. **2**They had their guards tie Jesus up and take him from there to Pilate, the {Roman} local ruler. They wanted
Pilate to condemn him.

3After that, Judas, the man who had helped {Jesus’ enemies} arrest him, realized that the ruling priests and Jewish
leaders had decided that Jesus was guilty. He regretted {what he had done}. So, he gave the 30 silver coins {that
they had paid him} back to them. **4**He told them, “I have done what is wrong by helping you arrest someone who is
not guilty.”

They replied, “We do not care {what you think}! That is your problem.”

5So Judas took the silver coins {that they had paid him} and threw them into the temple. Then he left {the temple
area}. After that, he hanged himself and died.

6Later, the ruling priests picked up the silver coins {that Judas had thrown}. They declared, “This is money that we
paid so that a man would die. So, our laws prohibit us from adding these coins to the money for the temple.”

7After planning what to do, they used the coins to buy some land that people called the Potter's Field. That way, they could bury on that land people who came from a different place {but who died in Jerusalem}. **8**That is why people now call that land Blood's Field. **9**At that time, what God said by speaking through the prophet Jeremiah came true: "They took the 30 silver coins, which was what some of the Israelites had decided that he was worth. **10**Then, the Israelites did what the Lord {God} had commanded me {to do}. They used those coins to buy the Potter's Field."

11As for Jesus, {the Jewish council} had him stand in front of {Pilate,} the {Roman} local ruler. Pilate asked him, "Do you claim to be king over the Jewish people?"

Jesus replied, "What you are calling me is right."

12Then the ruling priests and the {Jewish} leaders claimed that Jesus had done {many bad things}. However, Jesus did not respond. **13**After that, Pilate asked him, "Are you going to respond to anything that they have accused you of doing?" **14**However, Jesus did not respond to even one of the things that they accused him of doing. How Jesus was acting greatly impressed {Pilate,} the {Roman} local ruler.

15It is important to know that whenever the Passover festival began, the {Roman} local ruler{, Pilate,} usually set free one person who was in jail. He allowed the group of people {who were in Jerusalem} to decide who it would be. **16**It is also important to know that a famous man whose name was Barabbas was in jail. **17**So, when the people {who were in Jerusalem} assembled, Pilate told them, "I will set free one person who is in jail. Whom do you want it to be? {Do you want it to be} Barabbas? Or {do you want it to be} Jesus, whom people call the Messiah?" **18**{Pilate asked that question} because he realized that the Jewish council had arrested Jesus and brought him to Pilate because they were jealous {of Jesus}.

19While Pilate was sitting where he did when he was deciding whether people were guilty or innocent, his wife sent a message to him: "Today I dreamed about that man, and it upset me very much. So, do not do anything with that man. He is a man who does what is right!"

20However, the ruling priests and the {Jewish} leaders convinced the groups of people {who were there} to ask Pilate {to set} Barabbas {free}. Also, {they convinced the groups of people} to have Pilate execute Jesus. **21**Then the {Roman} local ruler{, Pilate,} told the groups of people {who were there}, "Choose one of these two men, and I will set that man free."

They replied, "{We want you to set} Barabbas {free}!"

22Pilate replied, "So what do you want me to do with Jesus, whom people call the Messiah?"

All the people {who were there} replied, "{Have your soldiers} kill him by nailing him to a cross!"

23Pilate replied, "But he has not done anything wrong!"

But they shouted even louder, "{Have your soldiers} kill him by nailing him to a cross!"

24Then Pilate realized that he was not accomplishing anything {by asking those questions}. Rather, the group of people {who were there} were starting to riot. So, while they were watching, he washed his hands in water {to indicate that he was not guilty}. He declared, "I am not guilty of killing this man! That is your problem."

25All the people {who were there} replied, "We and our children will be responsible for killing this man!" **26**Then Pilate set Barabbas free. He had his soldiers whip Jesus and take him away to kill him by nailing him to a cross.

27After that, the soldiers who served the {Roman} local ruler{, Pilate,} took Jesus into their headquarters. They assembled all the soldiers who were there. **28**They pulled off his clothes and put a red robe on him{, the kind that kings wear}. **29**They took some branches with thorns and laced them together to make a crown. They put it on Jesus' head and had him hold a staff. Then they bowed down in front of him and made fun of him. They said, "Greetings, you who are king over the Jewish people!" **30**Then, they spat on Jesus {to insult him}. Also, they took the

staff {from him} and kept hitting his head {with it}. **31**After the soldiers made fun of Jesus, they pulled the robe off of him. They put his own clothes back on him. Then, they took him {from there to the place where} they were going to kill him by nailing him to a cross.

32As they were on their way, they passed a man who was from the city of Cyrene. His name was Simon. The soldiers forced this man to carry the cross for Jesus. **33**Then, they arrived at a place whose name is Golgotha. That name means "Skull Place." **34**The soldiers offered Jesus a drink that they had made out of wine and a bitter liquid. After he took a sip of it, Jesus refused to drink it. **35**After nailing Jesus to the cross, the soldiers split up his clothes among them by gambling for them. **36**Then, the soldiers stayed there to make sure that Jesus died. **37**They wrote on a sign why {they were executing Jesus}. On the sign were these words: "This man is Jesus. He was king over the Jewish people." The soldiers placed the sign above Jesus' head.

38After that, the soldiers nailed two bandits to crosses near Jesus. They put one bandit on one side of Jesus. They put the other bandit on the other side of Jesus. **39**The people who walked past Jesus insulted him by shaking their heads {at him}. **40**They said {to him}, "You said that you could tear down God's temple and construct it again within three days. So, rescue yourself! Show us that you really are God's Son. Get down from that cross!"

41Similarly, the ruling priests, the teachers of the Jewish law, and the {Jewish} leaders made fun of Jesus. They declared, **42**"He has rescued other people. However, he cannot rescue himself! He {says that he} is king over the people of Israel. So, he should get down now from that cross. Then we will trust him! **43**He says that he is God's Son and that he relies on God. However, if God really wanted to do so, he would protect him right now." **44**The two bandits whom the soldiers had nailed to crosses near Jesus also insulted him in similar ways.

45At noon, it became dark in that whole area. {It stayed dark} until three o'clock in the afternoon. **46**At about three o'clock in the afternoon, Jesus shouted, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" That means, "My God, my God, why did you abandon me?"

47Some people who were there heard {what Jesus said and misunderstood it}. They said, "He is speaking to the prophet Elijah!" **48**As soon as they said that, one person quickly went to get a sponge. He soaked it in sour wine and attached it to the top of a staff. Then, he held it up to Jesus so that Jesus could suck {the sour wine} from it.

49Then the other people there said, "Do not do anything else for him! We should wait to find out whether Elijah appears to rescue him." **50**After that, Jesus shouted loudly again. Then, he died. **51**Then the drape hanging {in front of the Most Holy Place} in the temple ripped in half. It tore from the top down to the bottom. Also, the earth quaked, and rocks broke apart. **52**Also, graves opened, and God made many of his people who had died alive again. **53**After God made Jesus alive again, those people left their graves. They went into {Jerusalem,} the sacred city. Many people saw them there.

54The Roman officer and his soldiers, who were making sure that Jesus died, saw the earth quaking and the other things that happened. They became extremely afraid. They declared, "This man really was God's Son."

55{While all that was happening,} many women were there. They had come with Jesus from the region of Galilee. They were the ones who had taken care of him. These women observed {what was happening} from farther away. **56**These women included Mary from the town of Magdala, another Mary who was the mother of James and Joseph, and Zebedee's wife.

57When it was evening, a wealthy man arrived. His name was Joseph, and he was from the city of Arimathea. He too was one of Jesus' apprentices. **58**Joseph went to Pilate. He asked Pilate to allow him to take the body of Jesus {to bury it}. So, Pilate told {his soldiers} to give {him the body}. **59**So Joseph received Jesus' body. He {prepared to bury it by} winding a fresh sheet of cloth around it. **60**Then, Joseph put Jesus' body into Joseph's own fresh grave. Joseph's workers had made it by digging into a rock cliff. After that, Joseph rolled a huge flat stone to block the entrance to the grave. Then he left. **61**{While Joseph was doing those things}, Mary from the town of Magdala and the other woman whose name was Mary were there in front of the grave.

62The next day was {the Jewish day of rest,} the day after Preparation Day. {On that day,} the ruling priests and the Pharisees assembled {to meet} with Pilate. **63**They said, “Sir, we can recall something that {Jesus,} that man who deceived {others,} said while he was still alive. He claimed that during the third day {after he died}, God would make him alive again. **64**So, please tell your soldiers to protect Jesus’ grave for the next three days. That way, his apprentices cannot go there, remove his corpse, and tell people that God had made him alive again. If they succeed in deceiving people {in this way}, it will be more dangerous than how Jesus himself deceived people.”

65Pilate told them, “Take with you some soldiers. Walk {to the grave and} protect it as well as you can.” **66**So, they went {to Jesus’ grave and} protected it. They marked the huge flat stone {that blocked the entrance. That way, they would know if anyone moved it}. Also, they left some soldiers there to make sure {that no one opened the grave}.

Chapter 28

1When the Sabbath ended, at dawn on Sunday morning, Mary from the town of Magdala and the other woman whose name was Mary went to observe Jesus’ tomb. **2**Then the earth quaked violently! {That happened} because an angel from the Lord descended from heaven. He went to {Jesus’ grave}. He rolled the flat stone away {from the entrance to the grave}. Then, he sat down on the stone. **3**This angel looked as bright as lightning. His garments were pure white. **4**The soldiers who were protecting {the grave} trembled because they were afraid of the angel. {They were so afraid that} they looked like they had died.

5The angel told the two women, “I realize that you are looking for Jesus, whom people killed by nailing him to a cross. So, you should stop being afraid! **6**God made him alive again, which is what he told you {would happen}. So, he is no longer in this place! If you walk with us, we will show you where his body was. **7**Then, hurry to his apprentices and tell them that God has made Jesus alive again. {Tell them that} they should listen, and that Jesus is going ahead of them to the region of Galilee. {Tell them that} Jesus will meet them there. I have told you {what to say}!”

8So the two women hurried away from the grave. They were afraid and also very happy. They ran {to where Jesus’ apprentices were} to tell them {what had happened and what the angel had said}. **9**{As they were running,} Jesus came up to them! He said, “Greetings!” The two women went to him and {bowed down to} hold his feet {to honor him}. Also, they worshiped him. **10**After that, Jesus told them, “You should stop being afraid! Go to my apprentices and tell them to leave for the region of Galilee. I will meet them there.”

11Then, the two women went to meet {Jesus’ apprentices}. Meanwhile, some of the soldiers {whom the Jewish leaders had told to make sure that no one opened Jesus’ grave} entered the city of Jerusalem. They told the ruling priests about everything that had happened {at Jesus’ grave}. **12**So, the ruling priests and the {Jewish} leaders assembled and planned what to do. They paid those soldiers a large number of silver coins {to bribe them}. **13**They instructed them, “Tell people that his apprentices arrived during the night while you were asleep and stole his body. **14**Suppose that the {Roman} local ruler{, Pilate,} learns what you are telling people. In that case, we will convince {him to refrain from punishing you}. You will not have to worry about anything.” **15**So, the soldiers accepted the silver coins. They told people what {the ruling priests and Jewish leaders} had instructed them {to say}. In fact, even now Jewish people continue to repeat the story that the soldiers told.

16Meanwhile, Jesus’ 11 apprentices traveled to the region of Galilee. They went to the hill to which Jesus had told them to go. **17**When they met him {there}, they worshiped him. However, they were unsure {that it really was Jesus}. **18**Then Jesus came up to them and said, “God my Father has authorized me {to rule} over everything that God has created. **19**So then, go {from here}. Help all groups of people become my apprentices. Baptize them so that they belong to {God} the Father, me his Son, and the Holy Spirit. **20**Instruct them so that they do everything that I have told you {to do}. Finally, I will be with you at all times, even up to the point when this current time period ends.”

Mark

Chapter 1

1I am going to tell you the good news about Jesus, the Messiah. He is the Son of God. **2**This story began as Isaiah, who spoke for God, wrote that it would:

“Listen, I am sending my messenger ahead of you.

He will make things ready for when you come.

3In the desolate place, someone will be calling out {to the people}:

‘Prepare yourselves to receive the Lord!

Make yourselves ready for when he comes!’”

4Now there was a man whose name was John. He baptized people in a desolate area. He proclaimed that people should allow him to baptize them. That would show that they were going to stop doing what was wrong. That way, God would forgive their sins. **5**Many people who lived in the region of Judea and many people who lived in the city of Jerusalem often went to listen to John. Many of these people agreed that they had sinned. Then, John baptized them in the Jordan River. **6**John wore rough clothes that he made out of camel’s hair. He fastened around his waist a belt that he made from animal skin. He ate grasshoppers and honey that he found in that desolate area. **7**He often preached, “Soon you will see someone else who is greater than I am. It is not appropriate for me even to kneel down and help him take off his sandals. **8**I use water to baptize you. However, he will give you the Holy Spirit, which will be like baptizing you.”

9Now while John was preaching and baptizing people, Jesus traveled from the town of Nazareth, which was in the region of Galilee. {He arrived where John was} and had John baptize him in the Jordan River. **10**As soon as John baptized him, Jesus waded out of the Jordan River. Then, he saw God opening the way from heaven. He saw that the Holy Spirit, who looked like a small bird, was descending {from heaven} to him. **11**Then God spoke from heaven, “You are my Son, the one whom I love dearly. What you do pleases me.” **12**As soon as that happened, the Holy Spirit sent Jesus into a desolate area. **13**Jesus stayed for 40 days in that desolate area with the animals that lived there. During that time, Satan tried to make Jesus sin. Also, angels took care of Jesus.

14Later, after {King Herod Antipas} arrested John, Jesus traveled {back} to the region of Galilee. There, he preached the good news from God. **15**He declared, “This is the moment when God is about to establish his kingdom here. Stop doing what is wrong! Trust the good news!”

16One day, Jesus was walking next to the Sea of Galilee. He saw {a man whose name was} Simon and that man’s {younger} brother, {whose name was} Andrew. They earned money by catching and selling fish. {When Jesus saw them,} they were using nets to try to catch fish. **17**Jesus told them, “Come with me and be my apprentices. I will teach you how to gather people {to be my apprentices}, just as you have been gathering fish.” **18**As soon as {Jesus said that}, they stopped working. They went with him and were his apprentices.

19Then Jesus walked a short distance {next to the sea}. He saw {a man whose name was} James and that man’s {younger} brother, {whose name was} John. They were sons of {a man whose name was} Zebedee. {When Jesus saw them,} they were preparing their fishing tools in a boat. **20**As soon as he saw them, Jesus commanded them, {“Come with me and be my apprentices.”} They got out of the boat and left Zebedee their father with the workers they had hired. They went with Jesus and were his apprentices.

21Jesus, along with Peter, Andrew, James, and John, went to the town of Capernaum. As soon as it was the Jewish day of rest, Jesus visited the Jewish meeting place and instructed {the people who were there}. **22**The way that Jesus taught impressed {the people who were there}. {It impressed them} because Jesus did not teach as the teachers of the Jewish law did. Rather, he taught them like someone whom God had authorized to do so. **23**As Jesus was instructing people in the Jewish meeting place, a man whom a demon controlled was there. He shouted, **24**"Jesus from the town of Nazareth, leave us alone! You must be here to punish us. I realize who you are. You are the special one whom God has set apart!"

25Then Jesus commanded the demon to stop {controlling the man}. He said, "Be quiet. Leave that man!" **26**The demon shook the man violently and shouted loudly. Then, it left the man.

27{What Jesus had done} impressed all {the people who were in the Jewish meeting place}, and they talked about it with each other. They said, "{What he does} is amazing! He teaches new things as someone whom God has authorized {to do so}. He tells the demons what to do, and they do what he says!" **28**And so, throughout the whole region of Galilee, people kept talking about what Jesus had done.

29As soon as {Jesus forced the demon out of the man}, he left the Jewish meeting place. He, along with Simon, Andrew, James, and John, went to Simon and Andrew's home. **30**Meanwhile, Simon's mother-in-law was resting in bed because she had a fever. As soon as {Jesus arrived}, the people there told him that she was sick. **31**So, Jesus went to her. He took her hand and helped her stand up. Then, she recovered from the fever and offered Jesus and his disciples some food.

32When it was late in the evening, people brought to Jesus many men and women who were sick or whom demons controlled. **33**In fact, almost everybody in the town of Capernaum assembled outside the door of {Simon and Andrew's home}. **34**Jesus cured many people who were sick in many different ways. He also forced demons out of many people. Further, because the demons realized that Jesus was {the Messiah}, he did not allow them to say anything.

35Jesus woke up early the next morning, before sunrise. He left {the house} and walked to a place where no one lived. He prayed {to God} there. **36**{When they realized that Jesus was gone}, Simon and other people with him urgently searched for Jesus. **37**When they found Jesus, they told him, "Almost everybody {in the town of Capernaum} is trying to find you. {We think that you should return there with us.}"

38Jesus replied, "{I will not return with you.} I need to do what I am here to do. So, we need to visit other towns in this area. That way, I can preach {the good news} in those places too." **39**So Jesus and his apprentices visited all the towns in the region of Galilee. Jesus preached {the good news} in the Jewish meeting places. Also, he forced demons out of people.

40One day, a man who had a skin disease approached Jesus. He bowed down before Jesus and urged him, "{Please heal me!} I know that you can heal me if you want to do so."

41Jesus pitied the man. So, he stretched out his hand and touched the man. Jesus told him, "I want {to heal you}, and I heal you now!" **42**At that time, Jesus cured the man. He no longer had the skin disease!

43As soon as {he healed the man}, Jesus commanded him to leave. As he was leaving, Jesus sternly told him, **44**"Do not tell anyone what just happened. Instead, go and show yourself to a priest {so that he can examine you and see that you no longer have the skin disease}. Also, present what Moses required you to offer to become ceremonially clean again. This will prove to the community {that you no longer have the skin disease}." **45**However, after the man left, he frequently told people about how Jesus had healed him. As a result, people from many different places kept approaching Jesus. So, Jesus could no longer walk into any town publicly. Instead, he stayed outside {the towns} in places where no one lived.

Chapter 2

[1]Sometime later, Jesus returned to the town of Capernaum. Then, people learned that he was in a certain house. [2]So, very many people assembled there. {There were so many of them} that there was no room for them inside the house or even outside the door. Jesus preached the good news to them. [3]Then some people arrived {at the house} where Jesus was. Four of them were carrying a man who could not move. [4]However, because of how many people were there, they could not carry the man close to Jesus. So, they went up on the flat roof of the house and dug a hole through it. Then, they lowered the man down as he was lying on his sleeping pad. [5]Jesus perceived that these people believed {that he could heal the man}. So, he said to the man who could not move, "Young man, I forgive you for your sins!"

[6]Now some teachers of the Jewish law were there. They were thinking to themselves, [7]"This man should not be saying that {he forgives sins}. The only one who can forgive sins is God. So, he is insulting God!"

[8]As soon as {they thought that}, Jesus realized what they were thinking to themselves. He told them, "You should not be thinking to yourselves that {I cannot forgive sins}. [9]You may think that it is easy to claim to forgive this man who cannot move for his sins{, since it is difficult to prove whether this has happened}. Similarly, you may think that it is difficult to tell {this man who cannot move} to stand up, carry his sleeping pad, and walk around{, since it is easy to prove whether this has happened}. [10]However, I want you to know that God has authorized me, the Son of Man, to forgive people on earth for their sins." So, he said to the man who could not move, [11]"Here is what I want you to do: stand up, carry your sleeping pad, and go home!"

[12]Then the man stood up! As soon as {he did that}, he carried his sleeping pad and left. Everyone saw him {do those things}, and it impressed all of them. They praised God and declared that they had never seen anything like that before.

[13]Then Jesus returned to the area next to the Sea of Galilee. A large group of people approached him, and he instructed them. [14]As Jesus was walking along, he noticed a man whose name was Levi. He was the son of a man whose name was Alphaeus. Levi was sitting in the booth {where the people came to pay him the taxes that the government required}. Jesus said to him, "Come with me and be my apprentice!" So, Levi stood up and went with him as his apprentice. [15]Later, Jesus was feasting in Levi's home. Many people who collected taxes and other sinful people feasted with Jesus and his apprentices. All these people went with Jesus as his apprentices.

[16]Then, some Pharisees who taught the Jewish law noticed that Jesus was eating food with sinful people and people who collected taxes. They told Jesus' apprentices, "He should not be feasting with people who collect taxes and other sinful people."

[17]Jesus learned what they said. He told them, "People who are well do not need a doctor. Rather, people who are sick need a doctor. I am here not to invite those who think they are righteous to come to me. Rather, {I invite} those who know that they have sinned {to come to me}."

[18]One day, the Pharisees and the apprentices of John the Baptizer were abstaining from eating in order to please God. Meanwhile, some people visited Jesus. They asked him, "The apprentices of John the Baptizer and the apprentices of the Pharisees are abstaining from eating in order to please God. However, your apprentices do not do so. Why not?"

[19]Jesus answered, "The friends of the bridegroom do not abstain from eating while the wedding celebration is still going on. Indeed, they continue to eat as long as the wedding celebration continues. [20]However, someday the bridegroom will no longer be with his friends. Then they will abstain from eating.

[21]People do not attach a piece of unshrunken cloth on old clothing in order to mend a hole. However, suppose {that they did}. {When they washed the garment,} the new piece of cloth would shrink and completely rip out of the old clothing. As a result, the hole would become even bigger! [22]Similarly, people do not put fresh wine into old skin

bags {to store it}. However, suppose {that they did}. The fresh wine {would ferment and expand} and tear open the skin bags. That would ruin the wine and the skin bags. So, in contrast, people put fresh wine into new skin bags."

23Later, Jesus {and his apprentices} were walking through grain fields during one of the Jewish days of rest. As the apprentices were walking along, they picked some grain {and ate it}. **24**So, some Pharisees said to Jesus, "Look! Your apprentices should not be working on a Jewish day of rest. Our law forbids us to do that."

25Jesus replied, "Consider the story in the Scriptures about what King David did when he and the men who were with him became very hungry but did not have any food. **26**As you know, David entered the sacred tent while Abiathar was the ruling priest. He ate some of the bread that had been on display before God, and he had the men who were with him eat some of it too. He did that even though the law allowed only the priests to eat that bread."

27Then Jesus told the Pharisees, "God did not create humans because of the Jewish day of rest. Rather, he created the Jewish day of rest because of humans. **28**So then, I, the Son of Man, can decide {what is right for people to do} even during the Jewish day of rest!"

Chapter 3

1Then Jesus again visited the Jewish meeting place there. A certain man also was there. He could not move his hand. **2**Since it was the Jewish day of rest, {the Pharisees who were there} focused on Jesus to see whether he would cure the man. They wanted to accuse Jesus {of disobeying the laws about not working on the Sabbath}. **3**Then Jesus told the man who could not move his hand, "Stand here in front of everyone!" {So, the man stood there.}

4Then Jesus told the Pharisees, "You know that the laws that God gave Moses allow people to do what is good and to rescue people on Jewish days of rest. They do not allow people to do what is wrong and to kill people {on Jewish days of rest}." However, the Pharisees did not respond to him.

5So Jesus stared at them angrily. Because they stubbornly refused to listen to him, he became very sad. Then Jesus commanded the man, "Extend the hand {that you cannot move}!" The man extended his hand, and he could move it again. **6**Then the Pharisees left {the Jewish meeting place}. As soon as {they left}, they met with some people who supported King Herod. Together, they started planning how they could kill Jesus.

7Jesus and his apprentices went back to the Sea of Galilee. Very many people from the region of Galilee went with him. Also, there were more people from the region of Judea, **8**from the city of Jerusalem, from the region of Idumea, from the east side of the Jordan River, and from the regions around the cities of Tyre and Sidon. Because they learned about all the things that Jesus was doing, all these many people went to where he was. **9-10**Further, because Jesus cured many people, many other people who were sick pushed forward in order to touch him. So, Jesus told his apprentices to prepare a boat for him {to get into}. That way, all those people would not crush him. **11**Also, when demons saw Jesus, they caused the people whom they controlled to kneel down in front of Jesus and yell, "You are the Son of God!" **12**Jesus frequently commanded the demons strongly that they should not tell people about him.

13Then Jesus went up on a hill. He told the apprentices whom he chose to come to him there. They joined him on the hill. **14**He chose 12 men to be his closest apprentices and to proclaim {the good news}. He called them his representatives. **15**He also authorized them to force demons out of people. **16**Here are the 12 representatives that Jesus chose. He chose Simon, whom he called Peter. **17**He chose James, Zebedee's son, and John, James' {younger} brother. He called the two of them Boanerges, which means "men who are like thunder." **18**He chose Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James (who was Alphaeus' son), Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot. **19**Finally, he chose Judas Iscariot. He was the one who helped Jesus' enemies arrest him.

20Then Jesus {and his apprentices} entered a certain house. A large group of people again assembled there. There were so many people that Jesus and his apprentices did not have enough time even to eat food. **21**Jesus' relatives

heard about what was happening. They thought that Jesus was insane. So, they traveled {from the town of Nazareth to where Jesus was} to force him to return with them.

22Now some teachers of the Jewish law arrived from Jerusalem. They were telling people, “Beelzebul controls this man. In fact, it is the leader of the demons who enables him to force demons out of people!”

23So Jesus told the people there to come to him. He used stories to teach them. He said, “Satan does not enable people to force out his own demons! **24**Suppose that the people in one nation fight against each other. That nation will not last. **25**Further, suppose that the people in one household fight against each other. That household will not last. **26**Similarly, suppose that Satan and his demons fight against one another. Satan would soon cease to rule over the demons! **27**Here is what is really true: before thieves can break into the home of a strong man and take his belongings, they must first tie up the strong man. After that, they can take the belongings from his home. **28**God will forgive many people who sin in many ways or who frequently insult {God or others}. What I have said is true. **29**However, God will not ever forgive people who insult the Holy Spirit. They will always be guilty because of how they sinned.”

30{Jesus spoke those things} because the scribes had said, “A demon controls this man!”

31Then Jesus’ mother and his {younger} brothers arrived. They waited outside {the house where he was}. They asked someone to go in and ask him to come out to them. **32**A large group of people were sitting with Jesus. They told him, “Your mother and your {younger} brothers are waiting for you outside.”

33Jesus replied, “I will tell you whom I consider to be my mother and my brothers.”

34Then Jesus looked at the people who were sitting with him. He declared, “These are the people whom I consider to be my mother and my brothers! **35**In fact, when a person does what God wants, I consider that person to be my brother or sister or mother.”

Chapter 4

1Sometime later, Jesus again started to instruct people while he was next to the Sea of Galilee. A very large group of people assembled to hear him. Because {there were so many people}, he got into a boat on the sea and sat down {to teach}. All the people stood on the shore, by the water. **2**Jesus began to use stories to instruct them about many things. As he was instructing them, he said, **3**“Listen to this: a farmer began to plant some grain seeds **4**As he was scattering them over the soil, some of the seeds fell on the path. Then some birds flew down and ate those seeds up. **5**Other seeds fell on shallow soil on top of a layer of rocks. Because they were growing in shallow soil, the seeds sprouted very quickly. **6**Then, the sun shone on the new plants and dried them up. Then, because they did not have good roots, the plants died. **7**Other seeds fell onto an area full of thorny plants. These thorny plants grew quickly and crowded out the grain plants. So, the grain plants did not produce a crop. **8**Finally, other seeds fell on fertile soil. They grew quickly, and they produced a crop. Some plants produced 30 {grains of wheat each}, others produced 60 {grains each}, and others produced 100 {grains each}.”

9Then Jesus told them, “You should think carefully about what you just heard me say!”

10Later, when no one else was with them, Jesus’ 12 representatives and some other apprentices asked Jesus to explain the stories he had told. **11**He replied, “God has revealed to you hidden things about his kingdom. However, I use only stories to instruct people who are not my apprentices. **12**That way, {just as you can read in the Scriptures,}

‘They will look at things, but they will not really see them.

They will hear things, but they will not learn from them.

Otherwise, they would stop doing what is wrong, and God would forgive them.’”

13Then Jesus told his apprentices, “Unless you realize what that story means, you will not be able to realize what
any of the other stories {that I tell} mean. **14**{In the story that I told you,} the seeds that the farmer planted
represent the good news. **15**Some people are like the seeds that fell on the path. They hear the good news.
However, as soon as they hear it, Satan comes and makes them forget the message that they heard. **16**Other
people are like the seeds that fell on shallow soil on top of a layer of rocks. When they hear the good news, they
rejoice and quickly believe it. **17**However, they are like plants without good roots, which do not live very long. In fact,
when bad things happen or when people hurt them because they accepted the good news, they quickly stop
believing it. **18**Other people are like the seeds that fell onto an area full of thorny plants. They hear the good news.
19However, they continue to focus on things in this world. They try to become rich, even though being rich is not as
helpful as they think it will be. Also, they desire many other things. When they do those things, it makes the good
news ineffective, just as thorny plants crowd out the good plants and keep them from producing a crop. **20**Finally,
other people are like the seeds that fell on fertile soil. When they hear the good news, they believe it. They are like
the plants that produced a crop. Some plants produced 30 {grains of wheat each}, others produced 60 {grains
each}, and others produced 100 {grains each}.”

21Then he told the people who were there, “People do not bring an oil lamp {into a house} in order to cover it with
a basket or a bench. Instead, they put it on a lampstand {so that it shines brightly}. **22**Here is what I mean: some
things are secret, but that is only because God will {eventually} let everyone know about them. **23**You should think
carefully about what you just heard me say!”

24Then he told the people who were there, “Make sure that you are listening carefully {to what I tell you}. How
carefully you listen is how much God will enable you to learn and understand. **25**God will reveal even more to
people who already know some things {about the good news}. However, God will cause people who know very little
{about the good news} to know nothing about it at all.”

26Then Jesus said, “Here is what God’s kingdom is like: a farmer planted some seeds. **27**During a period of many
days, those seeds started to grow. The farmer did not really know how they grew. **28**The plants grew out of the
ground on their own. First, the stalks grew. Then, the parts where the seeds would appear grew. Finally, the grain
seeds grew in that part. **29**As soon as the plants produced grain, it was time to harvest it. So, the farmer told people
to cut down the plants and collect the grain.”

30Then Jesus said, “I would like us to consider together what God’s kingdom is like. I will use a story to make sure
that we all understand it. **31**Here is what it is like: someone plants a tiny mustard seed in the ground. This kind of
seed is smaller than every other kind of seed in the world. **32**Once someone plants it, the seed {sprouts and} grows
quickly. The plant becomes bigger than every other kind of plant that people grow. It has big branches. In fact,
birds can land in the shade it creates and make nests there.”

33Jesus used many stories like these to teach the good news to the people who were there. He taught them as
much as they could understand. **34**He taught them by using stories only. Later, when no one else was with them, he
told his apprentices what all the stories meant.

35When it was evening on the same day, Jesus told his apprentices, “Let us go {by boat} to the other side of the Sea
of Galilee.” **36**Since Jesus was already in the boat, the apprentices sailed away with Jesus from the large group of
people. Other people sailed with them in other boats. **37**Then there was a powerful windstorm! High waves were
splashing into the boat and quickly filling it up with water.

38Meanwhile, Jesus was in the back part of the boat. He was asleep, with his head on a pillow. The apprentices
woke him up and told him, “Instructor! We are going to die. You should be paying attention!”

39Then Jesus got up. He scolded the wind. He told the water, “Become still!” The wind stopped blowing, and
everything became calm. **40**Then Jesus told his apprentices, “You should not be so afraid. You should be trusting
God by now!”

41The apprentices became very afraid. They kept asking each other, “Who could Jesus be? The wind and the water do what he says!”

Chapter 5

1Then Jesus and his apprentices arrived on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, in the region where the Gerasene people lived. **2**As soon as Jesus got out of the boat, a man whom a demon controlled came up to him. This man had come from the burial caves. **3**In fact, he lived in the burial caves. The people who lived nearby could not tie him up, not even with {metal} chains. **4**In the past, they had frequently tied him up with {metal} chains and bonds. However, he always snapped the {metal} chains and broke apart the bonds. He was so strong that nobody could overpower him. **5**All day long, this man would yell and hurt himself with rocks while he wandered around among the burial caves and the hills.

6{After Jesus arrived,} this man saw him from far away. He ran to where Jesus was and knelt before him. **7-8**Then Jesus said, “You demon, leave this man!”

Then the demon shouted loudly. It said, “Jesus, Son of the greatest God, leave me alone! I want you to have God guarantee that you will not make me suffer.”

9Then Jesus asked the man, “What do people call you?”

He replied, “People call me ‘Thousands.’ {They call me that} because there are many of us demons in this man.” **10**Then the demon repeatedly urged Jesus not to make the many demons leave that area.

11While all that was happening, a large herd of pigs was grazing nearby on a hillside. **12**The demons urged Jesus, “{When you force us out of this man,} please allow us to go to those pigs. That way, we can control them.”

13Jesus allowed them to do that. So, the demons left the man and began to control the pigs. Then, the herd of pigs rushed down the steep bank into the Sea of Galilee! There were about 2,000 of them, and they drowned there in the sea.

14Then those who were taking care of the pigs ran away. They told all the people who lived around them {about what they had seen}. Those people went to see what had happened. **15**When they arrived where Jesus was, they saw the man whom the thousands of demons had controlled. He was sitting down, he had clothes on, and he was thinking normally. So, {they realized how powerful Jesus must be, and} they became afraid. **16**The people who had seen what Jesus did explained everything to the people who had just arrived. They told them about what Jesus did for the man whom the demons had controlled. They also told them what happened to the pigs. **17**Then the people who were there started to urge Jesus to leave their area.

18While Jesus was entering the boat {to leave}, the man whom the demons had controlled urged Jesus to allow him to go with Jesus as his apprentice. **19**However, Jesus did not allow the man {to go with him}. Instead, he told him, “Go home to your friends and family. Tell them about everything that the Lord {God} has done for you and how he has helped you.” **20**So, the man traveled around the region of the Ten Towns. He told people how much Jesus had done for him. {What the man said} impressed all the people {who heard it}.

21Meanwhile, Jesus {and his apprentices} sailed in a boat back to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus stayed next to the Sea of Galilee, and a large group of people assembled near him. **22**Then, a certain man arrived. He was a leader of the Jewish meeting place there. His name was Jairus. When he saw Jesus, Jairus knelt before him. **23**He urged Jesus repeatedly, “My young daughter is about to die. Please come {with me} and touch her. That way, you will rescue her, and she will stay alive.”

24So Jesus {and his apprentices} left with Jairus {to go to his house}.

A large group of people went with them, and they were almost crushing Jesus. **25**Now there was a woman {in the crowd} who had been suffering for 12 years from a disease that caused continual bleeding. **26**{During those 12 years,} she had spent all the money that she had to pay for doctors. However, these doctors only hurt her more. So, she did not get any better. Instead, she actually became more sick. **27-28**When she learned what Jesus had done, she thought, "Just touching Jesus' clothing will cure me." So, in the large group of people, she approached Jesus from behind. She touched his robe. **29**As soon as {she did that,} her bleeding stopped. She could feel inside herself that she was no longer sick.

30As soon as {she touched his robe}, Jesus recognized that someone had benefited from how powerful he was. So, in the middle of the large group of people, he spun around and asked, "Which of you touched my clothing?"

31His apprentices replied, "Look at the large group of people that is almost crushing you! {Probably many people have touched you.} So, it does not make sense to ask who touched you."

32However, Jesus kept trying to see the person who had touched his clothes. **33**Then the woman came up to Jesus. She realized what had happened, and she shook because she was afraid. She knelt before Jesus and told him exactly what had happened. **34**Jesus replied, "Young woman, because you believed {that I could heal you}, you are now well. Now go on your way, and may God make you peaceful. You will not be sick in that way again."

35While Jesus was still talking {with that woman}, some messengers arrived from the house of Jairus, the leader of the Jewish meeting place. They told Jairus, "Your daughter is dead. You should not continue to ask the instructor to help."

36Jesus listened to what the messengers said. Then, he told Jairus, "You should stop being afraid! You just need to trust {that I can help your daughter}."

37Then Jesus took only Peter, James, and James' {younger} brother John with him. He did not allow anyone else to come with them. **38**Then they arrived at the house of Jairus, the leader of the Jewish meeting place. Jesus noticed that the people there were making a lot of noise. They were crying very sorrowfully. **39**Then Jesus went into the house. He told the people there, "You should not be making much noise and crying sorrowfully! The young woman is not dead! She is only sleeping." **40**The people made fun of him {for saying that}.

However, Jesus made all of them leave {the house}. Then, he went to where the young woman was. He took with him the young woman's father and mother as well as Peter, James, and John. **41**Jesus took hold of the young woman's hand. He said to her, "Talitha koum!" That means, "Young woman, I tell you to get up!" **42**As soon as {Jesus said that}, the young woman {became alive again,} stood up, and walked around (in fact, she was 12 years old). That greatly impressed everyone who was there. **43**Jesus ordered them firmly, "Do not tell anyone about what I have done here!" Also, he told them to serve the young woman some food to eat.

Chapter 6

1After that, Jesus left {the city of Capernaum}. He traveled to {the city of Nazareth,} where he had grown up. His apprentices went with him. **2**When it was the Jewish day of rest, he started to instruct the people there when they gathered in the Jewish meeting place. What they heard him say impressed the many people {who were there}. They said {to each other}, "We do not know how this man is able to do what he does. We do not know how he is so wise and does such powerful things. **3**He is just a woodworker! He is Mary's son, and he is an {older} brother to James, Joses, Judas, and Simon. His {younger} sisters live here in our town." So, these people rejected Jesus.

4So, Jesus told them, "The only ones who do not respect people who speak for God are those from where they grew up, their clans, and their own families."

5Jesus could do very few powerful things in that place. He only touched a few people who were sick and cured them. **6**How little the people trusted him surprised Jesus. After that, Jesus traveled through the small towns in that area, and he instructed the people there.

7One day, Jesus told his 12 representatives to come to him. {He told them that} he was going to have them travel around in groups of two. He authorized them {to force} demons {out of people}. **8-9**He told them to wear sandals and to bring a walking stick. However, he instructed them not to pack anything else to bring with them, including food, a traveler's bag, money, or an extra shirt. **10**He also told them, "When someone welcomes you into their home, continue to stay there until you leave that area. **11**Whenever people in a certain place do not welcome you or listen to you, you should leave {that place}. As you are going, shake the dust from that place off your feet to warn them {that God will punish them}."

12Then Jesus' 12 representatives left {to travel around}. They preached that people should stop doing what was wrong. **13**They forced demons out of many people. They put olive oil on many people who were sick. Then, they cured them.

14By this time, Jesus had become famous. So, King Herod Antipas{, the ruler over the region of Galilee,} heard {people talking} about him. Some people declared, "God has made John the Baptizer alive again {as Jesus}, and that is why he does these powerful things."

15Other people declared, "He is the prophet Elijah{, who has returned to us}."

Other people declared, "He is a person who speaks for God, just like one of the people who spoke for God long ago."

16King Herod Antipas listened {to those people}. Then he declared, "I had someone cut John the Baptizer's head off! However, God must have made him alive again {as Jesus}."

17-18{Herod said that because John had already died.} Here is how that happened: Herod married Herodias, who had previously been the wife of Herod's brother Philip. John the Baptizer told Herod, "Our law forbids you to marry Herodias, your sister-in-law." So, Herod told his soldiers to go and arrest John. They tied him up and put him in jail. **19-20**Herodias was so upset with John that she wanted to have someone execute him. However, Herod realized that God had set John apart and that John did what was right. So, Herod was afraid {to do anything to John}. Also, he prevented Herodias from doing what she wanted {to John}. Whenever Herod listened to John, he was not sure how to respond, but he enjoyed listening to him.

21Then, one day, Herodias realized that she might be able {to have someone execute John}. It was Herod's birthday, and he had invited his important officials, some military commanders, and the most important people in the region of Galilee to feast with him. **22**{While they were feasting}, Herod's stepdaughter, the daughter of Herodias, came in. She danced for Herod and his guests, and they greatly enjoyed {her dancing}. So, King Herod told her, "I will give you whatever you request!" **23**Further, he solemnly promised, "You can even ask for half of what I rule over. I will still give you whatever you request!"

24So, the young woman left {that place and went to her mother, Herodias}. She asked her mother, "What should I request?"

Her mother replied, "Request {that someone cut off} John the Baptizer's head {and give it to you}."

25As soon as {her mother said that,} the young woman hurried back to King Herod. She told him, "I want {you to cut off} John the Baptizer's head right now and bring it to me on a plate!"

26King Herod was sad {about what she asked for}. However, because he had solemnly promised in front of all his guests {to give her what she asked for}, he decided to do what she requested. **27**So, King Herod told a soldier to go to {the jail} where John was{, cut off his head,} and bring his head back. The soldier left and cut off John's head while he was in jail. **28**Then, the soldier put John's head on a plate and gave it to the young woman. She {left and}

gave it to her mother{, Herodias}. **29**When John's apprentices learned {what had happened}, they went to the jail. They took John's dead body and buried it.

30As for Jesus' representatives, they returned to Jesus {from where they had traveled}. They told him about everything that they had done and everything that they had instructed people about. **31**Now people were arriving and leaving {where they were} all the time. In fact, they did not even have enough time to eat food. So, Jesus told his representatives, "Come to a place where no one lives and where no one else will be with us. Then, you can rest some!"

32So, they sailed in a boat to a place where no one lived and where no one else would be with them. **33**Now people noticed them sailing away. Many of those people realized {that it was Jesus and his apprentices}. So, they left all their towns and ran to where {Jesus and his apprentices were sailing}. They got there before Jesus and his apprentices did! **34**When Jesus got out of the boat, he saw a large group of people. He noticed that they were like sheep who did not have a sheepherder {to lead them and to take care of them}. So, he pitied them and started to instruct them about many things.

35When it was already late in the day, the apprentices approached Jesus. They said to him, "This is a place where no one lives, and it is already late in the day. **36**So, please tell these people to walk to the places that are near us, where they can buy food to eat."

37Jesus replied, "I want you to provide them with food to eat!"

They responded, "Surely you do not want us to go and spend 200 coins to buy enough loaves of bread to provide these people with food!"

38Then Jesus asked his apprentices, "How many loaves of bread do you have? Find out!"

Once they had found out {how many they had}, they told Jesus, "We have five loaves of bread and two fish."

39Then Jesus told all the people who were there to sit down in groups on the fresh grass {that was growing on the ground}. **40**So, they sat down in groups. Some groups had 100 people, and some groups had 50 people. **41**He picked up the five loaves of bread and the two fish. Then he thanked God for the food. After that, he tore the bread into pieces and gave the pieces to his apprentices. That way, they could serve them to the people who were there. He similarly {had his apprentices} serve the two fish to everyone {who was there}. **42**Everyone ate {the bread and the fish}, and they all had enough to eat. **43**Then the apprentices gathered what was left of the bread and fish. They filled 12 large containers {with the leftovers}! **44**There were about 5,000 men who ate the bread and fish.

45As soon as {everyone finished eating}, Jesus had his apprentices get into a boat and sail without him across {the Sea of Galilee} to the town of Bethsaida. He stayed behind to tell the large group of people to go home. **46**After he said goodbye to the people who were there, he walked to the top of a hill to pray {to God}. **47**When it became dark, the apprentices were in the boat in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. Meanwhile, Jesus was on the hill by himself. **48**Now the wind was blowing from where the apprentices wanted to go, so they were struggling to row {the boat across the Sea of Galilee}. Jesus noticed that. So, soon before morning, he joined them. He was walking on top of the Sea of Galilee! He planned to walk right past them. **49-50**When the apprentices saw Jesus walking on top of the Sea of Galilee, it disturbed them. {They did not know that it was Jesus, so} they thought that he must be a dangerous spiritual being. So, they shouted loudly.

However, as soon as {they shouted loudly}, Jesus told them, "Do not worry! I am {Jesus}. Stop being afraid!" **51**Then Jesus joined the apprentices in the boat. At that moment, the wind stopped blowing. {When that happened,} it impressed them greatly. **52**{They reacted that way} because they did not realize what it meant {when Jesus fed the large group of people with} the loaves of bread. In fact, they stubbornly refused to understand it.

53After Jesus and his apprentices finished sailing across the Sea of Galilee, they landed on the shore in the region of Gennesaret. They tied the boat there. **54**As soon as they got out of the boat, people realized that Jesus was there. **55**Those people hurried to all the places within that region. Whenever people {in those places} learned that Jesus

was in a specific place, they started to bring there on sleeping pads many other people who were sick. **56**Jesus visited many villages, towns, and farms. Wherever he visited, people put those who were sick in the open areas. These people who were sick asked Jesus to allow them just to touch the hem of his robe. Everyone who did so became healthy.

Chapter 7

1After that, some Pharisees and some teachers of the Jewish law arrived from the city of Jerusalem. They assembled where Jesus was. **2**Then, they noticed that some of Jesus' apprentices did not cleanse their hands before eating food. So, their hands were unclean {when they ate the food}. **3**{The Pharisees and the teachers of the Jewish law noticed that} because most Jewish people, and especially the Pharisees, always cleanse their hands in a special way before they eat food. That is the teaching that they received from their ancestors.

4Also, {when they come home} from the open areas in their towns, they always cleanse themselves before they eat food. They have many other similar teachings. {For example,} they cleanse many different kinds of dishes and containers. **5**So, the Pharisees and the teachers of the Jewish law told Jesus, "Your apprentices have unclean hands when they eat food. They are disobeying the teachings we received from our ancestors. They should not do that!"

6Jesus replied, "Isaiah {the prophet} was right when God spoke through him about you. You say that you obey God, but you really do not! Here is what Isaiah wrote:

'You people treat me respectfully when you talk,

but you do not really care about me. **7**

When you worship me, it is useless.

{That is because} you use only what humans have commanded to instruct others.'

8You carefully obey human teachings, but you ignore the laws that God gave us."

9Further, Jesus told them, "You easily stop obeying the laws that God gave us in order to obey the teachings that you received. You should not be good at doing that! **10**For example, Moses gave this law: 'Treat your parents respectfully.' {He} also {gave this law}: 'Execute anyone who insults his or her parents.' **11**However, you tell people that they can say to their parents, 'I designated as Corban everything that I could have used to provide for you.' (That means that they gave it to God.) **12**Then, you allow them to stop helping their parents. **13**In that way, you use what you learned and teach to ignore what God commanded. There are many things that you do that are like that."

14Then Jesus again told the large group of people to come to him. He told them, "You all should listen to what I {am about to say} and learn {from it}. **15**Whatever people eat cannot make them unclean. Rather, it is what people do and say that makes them unclean. **16**[You should think carefully about what you just heard me say!]"

17Later, Jesus went into a house {with his apprentices}, away from the large group of people. Then, the apprentices asked him to explain the example {he had given}. **18**Jesus answered, "So, you too have not yet learned what I mean. You should know that whatever people eat cannot make them unclean. **19**In fact, what people eat does not become part of what they think. Rather, it simply goes into their stomachs. Eventually, their bodies expel what they ate into toilets." So, {Jesus was implying that} no food is unclean.

20Then Jesus told them, "It is what people do and say that makes them unclean. **21**In fact, it is because of what people think and care about that they think wrong things. They have improper sex, steal things, and kill others. **22**They are sexually unfaithful to their spouses, want more than they need, and do what is evil. They trick others, fail to restrain themselves, and are jealous. They say bad things {about God or others}, think too highly of themselves, and are foolish. **23**People do and say those wicked things, and that makes them unclean."

24After that, Jesus {and his apprentices} left the region of Gennesaret. They traveled to the areas near the cities of Tyre and Sidon. Jesus tried to keep people from learning where he was staying. However, people soon found out where he was. **25**In fact, as soon as {he arrived}, a certain woman learned about him. A demon was controlling this woman's young daughter. So, she walked to where Jesus was and knelt before him. **26**It is important to know that this woman was not Jewish. Instead, her ancestors were people from the regions of Syria and Phoenicia. {While she was kneeling before Jesus,} she begged him to force the demon out of her daughter.

27Jesus told her, "Suppose that someone takes food for children and gives it to dogs instead. That is not appropriate! So, the children should eat before {the dogs do}. {That is why I am not helping you.}"

28The woman replied, "My Lord, what you say is correct. However, dogs lying nearby do eat leftovers from the children's food. {What I am asking you to do is like those leftovers.}"

29Jesus replied, "Because of what you have said, {I will do what you asked}. You can go home. {I have forced} the demon to stop controlling your daughter."

30So, the woman went home. She saw that her daughter was resting. The demon had stopped controlling her.

31Then, Jesus {and his apprentices} left the areas near the city of Tyre. They walked through the areas near the city of Sidon and eventually arrived near the Sea of Galilee in the region of the Ten Towns. **32**Then, people led to Jesus a man who could not hear and who could not speak well. They urged Jesus to {heal him by} touching him. **33**So, Jesus brought the man to a place where no one from the large group of people was with them. He stuck one of his fingers into each of the man's ears. Then, he spit and touched the man's tongue. **34**Next, Jesus groaned as he prayed to God. Then he told the man, "Ephphatha!" That means, "Open up!" **35**After that, the man could hear. Also, Jesus had corrected what was wrong with his mouth, so he could speak properly.

36After that, Jesus ordered the people {who were nearby} not to tell anyone {about what he had done}. However, every time he ordered them {not to do so}, they told even more people {about what he had done}. **37**When people learned what Jesus had done, it greatly impressed them. They declared, "Everything that he does is good! He enables people who could not hear to hear. He enables people who could not speak to speak."

Chapter 8

1Sometime later, there was again a large group of people {near Jesus}, and they did not have any food to eat. So, Jesus told his apprentices to come to him. He told them, **2**"I pity the large group of people. They have already spent three days with me, and they do not have any food to eat. **3**Further, suppose that I tell them to go home while they are hungry. Some of them live far away from here. They would pass out while they are walking home."

4His apprentices replied, "In this place where no one lives, no one has enough food for these people to have enough to eat!"

5Then Jesus asked them, "How many loaves of bread do you have with you?"

They replied, "We have with us seven loaves of bread."

6Then Jesus told the large group of people to sit down on the ground. He picked up the seven loaves of bread. Then he thanked God for the food. After that, he tore the bread into pieces and gave the pieces to his apprentices. That way, they could serve them to the large group of people, which they did. **7**The apprentices also had some little fish. So, Jesus thanked God for these fish and told the apprentices to serve them too {to the large group of people}. **8**The people ate {the food}, and they had enough to eat. Then the apprentices gathered the food that was left. {They filled} seven large containers! **9**About 4,000 people were there. Then Jesus told them to go home. **10**As soon as {he told them that}, Jesus and his apprentices climbed into a boat. They sailed to the region of Dalmanutha.

11Some Pharisees came to Jesus and started to debate with him. They wanted to investigate him, so they asked him to perform a miracle that showed that God had sent him. **12**Jesus groaned to himself. Then he said, “You people who are alive right now should not ask me to perform a miracle {that proves that God sent me}. I will never do that kind of miracle for you people! What I have said is true.”

13Then Jesus went away from the Pharisees. He {and his apprentices} again entered a boat and sailed to the other side {of the Sea of Galilee}. **14**Now the apprentices had not remembered to pack any food. In fact, the only food that they had in the boat was one loaf of bread. **15**{While they were sailing,} Jesus ordered the apprentices, “Make sure that you guard against the yeast that the Pharisees use and the yeast that Herod uses.”

16Then the apprentices told each other that they had very little food.

17Jesus realized {what they were saying to each other}. He told them, “You should not be telling each other that you have very little food. You should already realize {what I can do}! However, you stubbornly refuse to understand it. **18**You look at things, but you do not really see them. You hear things, but you do not really listen. You should remember {what I have done}! **19**When I tore five loaves of bread into pieces and used them to feed 5, 000 people, you gathered what was left of the food. How many large containers did you fill {with the leftovers}?”

The apprentices replied, “{We filled} 12 {large containers}.”

20{Then Jesus asked,} “Again, when {I tore} seven {loaves of bread into pieces} and used them to feed 4, 000 people, you gathered the food that was left. How many large containers did you fill?”

The apprentices replied, “{We filled} seven {large containers}.”

21Then Jesus told his apprentices, “You should already realize {what I can do}!”

22After that, Jesus and his apprentices arrived at the town of Bethsaida. The people there took a blind man to Jesus. They urged Jesus to {heal the man} by touching him. **23**So, Jesus took one of the blind man’s hands. He brought the blind man outside the town. Then Jesus spat saliva onto the man’s eyes, and Jesus touched him. After that, he asked the man, “Can you see anything?”

24So, the man looked around. He said, “{Yes,} I can see people! They look like trees, but I can tell that they are walking around.”

25After that, Jesus again touched the blind man’s eyes. When the man looked around carefully, he could see everything properly. Jesus had cured him! **26**Jesus commanded the man, “Do not go into the town {of Bethsaida}!” Then he told the man to go home.

27After that, Jesus and his apprentices left {the town of Bethsaida} and walked toward the small towns near the city of Caesarea Philippi. While they were walking, Jesus asked his apprentices, “Who do people say that I really am?”

28The apprentices replied, “People say that you are one of the prophets {who has come back to life}. {More specifically,} some people say that you are John the Baptizer. Other people say that you are the prophet Elijah.”

29Then Jesus asked them, “As for you, who do you say that I really am?”

Peter replied, “You are the Messiah!”

30Then Jesus ordered the apprentices not to tell anyone who he really was.

31After that, Jesus started to instruct his apprentices about what had to happen to him, the Son of Man. People would hurt him very much. The Jewish leaders, the ruling priests, and the teachers of the Jewish law would refuse to listen to him. Then, people would kill him. Three days after he died, he would live again. **32**Jesus told that to them clearly. Then Peter spoke to Jesus privately. He started to scold him.

33Jesus turned around and looked at his {other} apprentices. Then he scolded Peter, “Do not try to stop me. You are behaving as Satan does! You are thinking about what humans care about instead of thinking about what God cares about.”

34Then Jesus told his apprentices and the large group of people to come to him. He told them, “People who want to come with me and be my apprentices must refuse to do what they want to do. They must be willing to suffer or die as if they were carrying their own crosses when they come with me as my apprentices. **35**{That is} because people who are willing to do anything to stay alive will not truly live. However, people who are willing to die because they are my apprentices and because they believe the good news will truly live. **36**Suppose that some people acquire everything they could possibly want. However, they can no longer truly live. That is not worth it! **37**In fact, people cannot acquire anything that is as valuable as truly living. **38**The men and women who are alive right now sin often and do not remain faithful. As they live among those men and women, some people consider it shameful to say that they believe in me and what I say. Then I, the Son of Man, will consider it shameful to say that those people belong to me. That will happen when I return with the angels whom God has set apart. At that time, I will be as glorious as God my Father.”

Chapter 9

1Then Jesus told his apprentices and the large group of people, “Some of you who are here with me will definitely see God powerfully establish his kingdom before you die. What I have said is true!”

2Six days later, Jesus climbed up a tall mountain. He had Peter, James, and John go with him. No one else was with them. Then, the three apprentices saw Jesus change how he appeared. **3**His clothes became very bright white. They were whiter than anyone on earth could make them by bleaching them. **4**After that, Elijah and Moses{, who were prophets from long ago,} appeared to the three apprentices! These prophets were speaking to Jesus.

5Peter responded by saying to Jesus, “Teacher, it is appropriate for all of us to be here. We should build three shelters. You, Moses, and Elijah can each use one.” **6**{Peter said that} because he and the other two apprentices were extremely afraid. So, he did not know how to respond {to what he saw}.

7Then a cloud covered all of them! God spoke from the cloud, “This man is my Son, the one whom I love dearly. Do what he says.”

8When the three apprentices looked around, suddenly, the only person whom they still saw with them was Jesus.

9While they were walking down the mountain, Jesus told them that they should not tell anyone about what they had just seen until he, the Son of Man, had become alive again. **10**So they did not tell others about what had happened. However, they talked with each other about what it meant when Jesus said that he would become alive again.

11Then those three apprentices asked Jesus, “The teachers of the Jewish law tell us that the prophet Elijah has to be here before {the Messiah gets here}. Are they right about that?”

12Jesus replied, “{Yes, the prophet} Elijah must be here before {the Messiah gets here}. He will make everything as it should be. However, consider this: {the prophets} wrote in the Scriptures that people would reject me, the Son of Man, and hurt me very much. **13**{That makes sense only because of} what I am about to tell you. {The prophet} Elijah has already been here. Further, people treated him badly, just as {the prophets} wrote in the Scriptures about him.”

14Then Jesus and those three apprentices arrived where the other apprentices were. They saw a large group of people around the other apprentices. Some teachers of the Jewish laws were debating with them. **15**As soon as {Jesus arrived}, the large group of people noticed him, and it surprised them very much. So, they hurried to him and said hello to him.

16Then Jesus asked his apprentices, “What are you debating with the teachers of the Jewish law?”

17A man in the large group of people replied, “Instructor, I came here to you with my son {so that you would heal him}. A demon controls him and keeps him from speaking. **18**Whenever the demon chooses, it makes my son fall down. Then, my son drools, grinds his teeth together, and becomes rigid. I asked your apprentices to force the demon out of him. However, they could not {do it}.”

19Jesus replied to them, “You people who are alive right now do not believe! It is hard for me to live here with you. It is difficult for me to be patient with you.” {Then he said to them,} “Bring the man’s son to me!”

20So, some people brought the man’s son to Jesus. As soon as the demon noticed Jesus, it shook the man’s son violently. He fell down and writhed around as he drooled.

21Jesus asked the boy’s father, “How long has he been like this?”

The boy’s father replied, “{He has been like this} since he was a child. **22**The demon also frequently makes him fall into fires and bodies of water in order to kill him. So, if you can do so, please pity us and help us!”

23Jesus replied, “You should not talk about whether I can {help you}. God can do anything for people who trust him!”

24As soon as {Jesus said that}, the boy’s father shouted, “I do trust {God}. Please help me trust {him} more!”

25Then Jesus noticed that a large group of people was quickly assembling. So, he commanded the demon {who was controlling the man’s son} to stop {doing so}. He said, “You demon who are keeping this boy from speaking and hearing, I tell you to stop controlling him! You may not control him again.”

26The demon shouted and shook the boy violently. Then it stopped controlling him. After that, the boy lay so still that he looked like a corpse. In fact, many people said that he was dead. **27**However, Jesus took hold of the boy’s hand and helped him get up. The boy stood up!

28Later, Jesus entered a house, and only his apprentices were with him. They asked him, “Why could we not force out that demon?”

29Jesus replied, “You can only force this type of demon out by praying and by not eating in order to please God.”

30After Jesus and his apprentices left that area, they traveled through the region of Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone else to know {where he was}. **31**{Jesus did not want people to know where they were} because he was instructing his apprentices. He told them, “Somebody will help my enemies arrest me, the Son of Man. They will have people kill me. Then, three days after I die, I will live again.” **32**However, the apprentices did not understand what Jesus was telling them, and they were afraid to ask him {what he meant}.

33Then Jesus and his apprentices arrived at the town of Capernaum. When they were in the house {where they were staying}, Jesus asked them, “What were you arguing about while we were walking here?” **34**However, while the apprentices were walking, they had been arguing with each other about which one of them was the most important. So, they did not answer {Jesus}.

35Then Jesus sat down. He called his 12 representatives to come close to him, and then he said to them, “If anyone wants God to consider him to be the most important person of all, he must consider himself to be the least important person of all, and he must serve everyone else.”

36Then Jesus had a young child stand among them. He hugged the child, and he told his apprentices, **37**“When people, because they are my apprentices, welcome any young child such as this one here, it is the same as welcoming me. Further, when people welcome me, they are also welcoming {God,} who sent me here.”

38John said to Jesus, “Instructor, we noticed someone who was forcing demons out of people. He claimed that he represented you as he did that. So, we told him to stop doing that, because he was not one of us apprentices.”

39Jesus said, “People will not say bad things about me soon after doing something powerful while they claim to represent me. Because of that, do not tell that man to stop {forcing demons out of people}. **40**{I say that} because those who are not opposing us are supporting us. **41**As for those who offer you water to drink because they know that you are apprentices of me, the Messiah, God will most certainly reward them. What I have said is true.

42On the other hand, suppose that an insignificant person who trusts me sinned because of certain people. {God will punish those people so severely that} they would prefer to have someone tie a heavy stone around their necks and cast them into the ocean. **43**Suppose that you sinned because you touched something. You should never do that again, even if you have to chop off your hands to make sure of it! {You should respond that drastically because} it is better for you to truly live without hands than to have both hands but end up in hell, which is like a fire that never goes out. **44**[In that place maggots feed on the people there forever, and the fires never go out.] **45**Suppose that you sinned because you went somewhere. You should never do that again, even if you have to chop off your feet to make sure of it! {You should respond that drastically because} it is better for you to truly live without feet than to have both feet but end up in hell. **46**[In that place maggots feed on the people there forever, and the fires never go out.]

47Suppose that you sinned because you looked at something. You should never do that again, even if you have to remove your eyes to make sure of it! {You should respond that drastically because} it is better for you to participate in God’s kingdom with only one eye than to have both eyes but end up in hell. **48**In that place maggots feed on the people there forever, and the fires never go out.

49Indeed, God will treat everyone like an offering that people season and burn.

50Salt is very useful. However, if salt were to stop seasoning food well, you cannot make it season food well again. Be people who make this world better, just as salt makes food better. Also, live peacefully with each other.”

Chapter 10

1After that, Jesus {and his apprentices} left the town of Capernaum. They traveled to the region of Judea and to the east side of the Jordan River. Yet again, large groups of people assembled where Jesus was. Jesus instructed them, as he usually did.

2Then some Pharisees came to Jesus and asked him, “Does our law allow a husband to divorce his wife?” {They asked that} in order to investigate him.

3Jesus replied, “What did Moses include in our Law {about this issue}?”

4They answered, “Moses allowed each husband to give {his wife} a document that states that he is divorcing her. Then, he could divorce her.”

5Jesus told them, “Moses knew that you were unwilling to obey. That is why he included {in the Law} what you just said. **6**However, when God first created everything, {as you can read in the Scriptures}, he created people to be male and female. **7**{You can also read in the Scriptures that} that is why men{, when they marry,} no longer live with their parents, **8**and each husband and wife together become like one person. Consequently, each husband and wife are not like two different people any longer. Rather, they are like one person. **9**Since that is true, no one should divide people whom God has united.”

10Later, when they were in a house again, the apprentices asked Jesus about what he had said. **11**Jesus told them, “When a man divorces his wife and marries another woman, he sins against his first wife by disobeying what God

commanded about being sexually faithful to one's spouse. **12**Also, when a woman divorces her husband and marries another man, she disobeys what God commanded about being sexually faithful to one's spouse."

13Sometime later, some people took young children to Jesus. They wanted him to bless the children by touching them. However, the apprentices told them to stop. **14**When Jesus noticed {what they were doing}, he was very upset. He told his apprentices, "Allow the young children to come here. Do not stop them! {I say that because} they and people like them are part of God's kingdom. **15**You must be like young children when you welcome God's kingdom. That is the only way to participate in God's kingdom. What I have said is true." **16**Then Jesus hugged the young children. He blessed them by touching them.

17One day, Jesus was walking along {with his disciples}. A certain person ran to where he was and bowed down before him. He said, "Instructor, you are a good person! What is something that I can do so that I will live with God forever?"

18Jesus replied, "You should not so quickly call me a good person! God is the only one who is good. **19**{But to answer your question,} you know what God commanded: Do not murder others. Do not be sexually unfaithful to your spouse. Do not steal things. Do not speak what is untrue. Do not cheat people. Treat your parents respectfully."

20The man replied, "Instructor, I have obeyed all those things that God commanded ever since I was young."

21Then, Jesus looked at the man and cared for him. He said to the man, "There is one thing that you have not yet done. Go {home} and sell what you own. Give {that money} to poor people. {If you do that,} God will reward you in heaven. Then, come with me as my apprentice."

22However, the man was rich {and did not want to lose what he owned}. So, he was upset by what Jesus said. He felt very sad and left. **23**Then Jesus looked at his apprentices. He told them, "It is very hard for rich people to participate in God's kingdom!"

24What Jesus said surprised the apprentices. Jesus responded by saying again, "My dear apprentices, it is very hard to participate in God's kingdom. **25**Large animals like camels cannot fit into very small spaces. However, it is even harder for rich people to participate in God's kingdom."

26That greatly surprised the apprentices. They told Jesus, "It must be that God does not actually rescue anyone!"

27Jesus looked directly at his apprentices. He said, "God can do anything! So, people cannot {rescue themselves}, but God can {rescue them}."

28Peter started to tell Jesus, "We left behind everything we had and went with you as your apprentices!"

29Jesus replied, "What I am about to say is true. Some people leave behind houses, siblings, parents, children, or fields. They do that because they are my apprentices and because they believe the good news. **30**God will give those people many times {what they left behind} right now before he renews everything that he has made. {He will give them} houses, siblings, mothers, children, and fields. Also, people will hurt them. Further, God will enable them to live with him forever after he renews everything that he has made. **31**{At that time,} many people who are important right now will become unimportant. Many people who are unimportant right now will become important."

32Sometime later, Jesus and his apprentices were walking toward the city of Jerusalem. Jesus was walking ahead of them, which impressed them. However, the rest of the people with them were afraid. Then Jesus again spoke to his 12 representatives privately. He started to tell them about what people were going to do to him. **33**He said, "We are walking toward the city of Jerusalem! There, somebody will help the ruling priests and the teachers of the Jewish law arrest me, the Son of Man. They will decide that I am guilty and that someone should kill me. They will bring me to the non-Jewish authorities. **34**Those people will make fun of me, spit on me {to insult me}, beat me, and execute me. Then, three days after I die, I will live again."

35After that, Zebedee's sons, James and John, came to Jesus. They said, "Instructor, we want you to do for us what we are about to request."

36Jesus replied, "What do you want me to do for you?"

37They answered, "Please promise us that, when you are very great, you will honor us by having one of us sit at your right side and the other one sit at your left side."

38Jesus replied, "You do not realize what you have actually requested. Are you willing to suffer as I will soon suffer? Are you willing for people to hurt you as they will soon hurt me?"

39They told Jesus, "Yes, we are willing {to do those things}."

Then Jesus told them, "You will certainly suffer as I will soon suffer. People will certainly hurt you as they will soon hurt me. **40**However, I am not the one who chooses whom to honor by having them sit at my right side or at my left side. Rather, God has already chosen who {will sit in those places}."

41When the ten other apprentices learned {what James and John had requested}, they started to be very upset with them. **42**So, Jesus told his apprentices to come to him. He said to them, "You understand that the people whom the non-Jews allow to govern them dominate them. Further, important people among them control everyone else. **43**You must not behave like that. Rather, when one of you wants to be important, that person must serve the others. **44**Likewise, when one of you wants to be most important, that person must work for all the others. **45**{You should behave like that} because I, the Son of Man, am here to serve other people. I am not here so that other people will serve me. Indeed, I am going to die in order to free many people {from their sins}."

46Then, Jesus and his apprentices arrived at the city of Jericho. When they were leaving the city of Jericho along with a very large group of people, a man who could not see and who often asked others for money was sitting down next to the path. His name was Bartimaeus, and his father's name was Timaeus. **47**He learned that Jesus from the town of Nazareth was there. So he started to shout, "Jesus, you who are a descendant of King David, please help me!"

48Many people were scolding him to keep him quiet. However, he shouted even more loudly, "You who are a descendant of King David, please help me!"

49Then, Jesus stopped walking. He told people, "Tell him to come over here!"

Those people spoke to {Bartimaeus,} the man who could not see. They said, "Do not worry! Jesus wants you to come to him. So, stand up {and go to him}!" **50**So Bartimaeus took off his outer garment and jumped up. Then, he hurried to Jesus.

51Jesus asked him, "How would you like me to help you?"

{Bartimaeus,} the man who could not see, replied, "Teacher, I want to be able to see again!"

52Jesus told him, "You can go on your way. Because you believed {that I could heal you}, you are now well." As soon as {Jesus said that}, Bartimaeus could see again. Then, he began to walk with Jesus.

Chapter 11

1After that, Jesus and his apprentices continued to walk toward the city of Jerusalem, and they were getting closer. They were near the Mount of Olives, just outside the villages of Bethphage and Bethany. Jesus told two of his apprentices to go {ahead of them}. **2**He instructed them, "Enter the village {of Bethphage}, which you see ahead of you. As soon as you enter it, you will see a young donkey that someone has tethered. It is an animal that no one has ever ridden. Remove the tether {from the young donkey} and lead it to me here. **3**People might ask you, 'What

are you doing?' In that case, tell them, 'The Lord needs this young donkey. As soon as {he finishes using it}, he will return it here.'"

4So the two apprentices left {for the village}. They saw the young donkey standing on the road. Someone had tethered it to the door of a house. They started to remove its tether.

5Some people who were there asked the two apprentices, "Why are you removing the tether from the young donkey?"

6The two apprentices told those people what Jesus had instructed them to say. Then, those people allowed the two apprentices {to take the young donkey}. **7**They led the young donkey to Jesus. Then they spread their coats on the young donkey, and Jesus rode on it. **8**Then, {to honor Jesus,} many people laid their coats down on the path {in front of Jesus}. Other people cut down leafy plants that were growing in nearby farms {and laid them down on the path too}. **9**People walked in front of Jesus and behind him. They were shouting,

"Praise God!

May God bless him who is here to represent the Lord!

10The kingdom that our ancestor King David ruled is now here again! May God bless it!

May everything in heaven praise God!"

11Then Jesus went into the city of Jerusalem and he visited the temple area. He examined everything that was there. After that, because it was evening, he and his 12 representatives returned to the village of Bethany.

12The following day, when Jesus and his apprentices were leaving the village of Bethany, Jesus became hungry. **13**He saw a fig tree further down the path. It had leaves, so he walked to it to pick some figs from it {to eat}. However, when he arrived at the fig tree, it had {no figs but} only leaves. That was because it was not yet the normal time of year when fig trees would produce ripe figs. **14**Jesus responded by saying to the fig tree, "No one will eat figs that they pick from you ever again." The apprentices listened {to him say that}.

15Then Jesus and his apprentices arrived at the city of Jerusalem. Jesus again visited the temple area. Some people were selling and buying things there. He started to force them to leave. Other people were exchanging {regular} money {for special temple money}, and other people were selling small birds {for people to sacrifice}. Jesus flipped over their tables and chairs. **16**Also, he did not allow people to take items through the temple area. **17**Then Jesus instructed those people, "You know that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures, 'People should say that my temple is a place where all groups of people pray.' However, you have turned it into 'a hideout for thieves'!"

18What Jesus taught impressed the large group of people. Because of that, when the ruling priests and the teachers of the Jewish law learned {what Jesus had said and done}, they became afraid of him. So, they planned how they might have someone execute Jesus. **19**That evening, Jesus and his apprentices left the city {of Jerusalem and again spent the night in the village of Bethany}.

20The next morning, Jesus and his apprentices walked past {the same fig tree that they had passed the previous morning}. The apprentices noticed that it had completely died. **21**Then Peter remembered {what Jesus had said to the fig tree}. He told Jesus, "Teacher, look! The fig tree that you cursed has died!"

22Jesus replied by telling his apprentices, "You should trust God! **23**Suppose that that you trusted that {God} would do what you said, and you were not unsure {that God would do it}. Then, you could tell the hill we are near to leave {this place} and fall into the ocean, and it would happen. What I have said is true. **24**Because that is true, here is what I want to tell you. Trust that God will give you whatever you ask him for, and he will give it to you. **25**Further, suppose that when you are praying, you remember that someone has offended you. You should forgive them. That way, God your Father, who rules from heaven, will also forgive you when you sin against him. **26**[However, God your

Father, who rules from heaven, will not forgive you when you sin against him as long as you do not forgive {other people}.]"

27After that, Jesus and his apprentices again arrived at the city of Jerusalem. While Jesus was walking around in the temple area, some of the ruling priests, the teachers of the Jewish law, and the other Jewish leaders approached him. **28**They asked him, "In what way did someone authorize you to do what you have done? Who was it that authorized you to do those things?"

29Jesus replied, "I, too, will ask you a question. When you answer it, I will answer your question about the way in which someone authorized me to do what I have done. **30**Did God authorize John the Baptizer from heaven to baptize people, or did people authorize {him to do that}? Answer that question!"

31Then the ruling priests, the teachers of the Jewish law, and the other Jewish leaders told each other, "Suppose that we answer that {God authorized John} from heaven. Then, he will tell us that we should have listened to John. **32**On the other hand, we cannot answer that people {authorized John}." {They said that because they knew that} the large group of people believed that John had truly spoken for God, which made them afraid of how the large group of people would react.

33So they answered Jesus, "We do not know {who authorized John}."

Jesus responded, "Because you did not answer my question, I will not tell you the way in which someone authorized me to do what I have done."

Chapter 12

1Then Jesus started to tell a story to the ruling priests, the teachers of the Jewish law, and the other Jewish leaders. He said, "A certain man planted a vineyard. He built a fence around it {in order to protect it}. He made a stone tank {to collect the grape juice that they would press out of the grapes}. He also built a tower {for someone to sit in to guard his vineyard}. He rented the vineyard to some people who would take care of it, and he left to travel to a different country. **2**When it was time {to harvest the grapes}, the man told one of his servants to go to the people who were taking care of the vineyard. He wanted them to give him his share of the grapes that the vineyard had produced. **3**However, the people who were taking care of the vineyard grabbed the man's servant. They beat him up and told him to go away without giving him any of the grapes. **4**After that, the man told another servant to go to the people who were taking care of the vineyard. However, they beat this servant on the head and insulted him. **5**After that, the man told another servant to go {to the people who were taking care of the vineyard}. However, they killed this servant. After that, the man sent many other servants. However, they beat up some of them and killed the others.

6Finally, the man still had only one other person with him, his son, whom he loved very much. So, the man told his son to go to them last of all. He thought that they would treat his son well {and give him his share of the grapes}. **7**However, {when} the people who were taking care of the vineyard {saw the man's son arriving, they} told each other, 'This man is the one who will inherit the vineyard. We should kill him, and then we can take the vineyard for ourselves.' **8**So, they grabbed the man's son and murdered him. Then, they dragged his corpse outside the vineyard.

9I will tell you how the man who owned the vineyard will act. He will arrive {at the vineyard}, and he will kill the people who were taking care of the vineyard. Then, he will arrange for other people to take care of it. **10**{What I have said fits with} this scripture that you have read:

'The people who were constructing a building

refused to use a certain stone.

However, that stone is now

the most important one in the building.

11The Lord {God} did that,

and we think it is amazing.'"

12Then the ruling priests, the teachers of the Jewish law, and the other Jewish leaders realized that Jesus was accusing them when he told that story. Because of that, they wanted to arrest him. However, they were afraid of how the large group of people would react. So, they left where he was {without arresting him}.

13Then, the ruling priests, the teachers of the Jewish law, and the other Jewish leaders told some of the Pharisees and some people who supported King Herod to go to Jesus. {They instructed them} to try to cause him to make a mistake in what he said. **14**When they arrived where Jesus was, they said to him, "Instructor, we realize that you say what is true. You do not pay attention to how important or powerful people are. So, you do not care about what other people think. Further, you truthfully instruct people about what God wants them to do. {So, we want to ask you this}: Does our law allow us to pay taxes to the Roman government, or {does it} not {allow that}? Should we pay the taxes, or should we not pay them?"

15However, Jesus realized that they were only pretending to respect him. He replied, "You are trying to make me say something wrong. Hand me a Roman coin so I can examine it."

16So, someone handed him {a Roman coin}. Then Jesus asked, "Whose picture and name are on this coin?"

They replied, "{It is} the leader of the Roman government's {picture and name}."

17Then Jesus told them, "{So then,} give to the Roman government what belongs to it and give to God what belongs to him."

What Jesus said impressed the Pharisees and the people who supported King Herod.

18After that, some Sadducees approached Jesus. They are a Jewish group that does not believe that God will make people who have died alive again. They asked Jesus, **19**"Instructor, Moses wrote for us {in the Scriptures} about what should happen when a man with a wife, but no children, dies. When that happens, the dead man's brother should marry the {dead man's} wife. When they have a child, they should consider it to be the child of the dead man. **20**{So, consider this situation}: there were seven brothers. One brother married a woman, but then he died before he had children. **21**Then, the second brother {obeyed this law and} married the woman. However, he too died before he had children. The same thing happened to the third brother. **22**In this way, each of the seven brothers {married the woman but} died before they had children. Finally, the woman died too. **23**So, of those brothers, whose wife will she be when God makes people alive again? {We ask} because she got married to all seven brothers {at different times}."

24Jesus replied, "You do not realize what the Scriptures mean or how powerful God is. Because of that, you believe what is wrong! **25**Here is what I mean: when God makes people alive again, they will not get married. Instead, they will be like angels who dwell in heaven {and do not get married}. **26**Now I will speak about whether God makes people who have died alive again. You have read in the section of the Scriptures that Moses wrote the story about {how God appeared to Moses in a} bush. In that story, God told Moses, 'I am the God whom Abraham worships, the God whom Isaac worships, and the God whom Jacob worships.'

27It is living people who worship God, not dead people. {So, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who all have died, must become alive again!} So, you have believed many things that are wrong."

28Then a man who taught the Jewish law approached Jesus. He heard Jesus and the Sadducees debating. He noticed that Jesus had given the Sadducees a good answer. So, he asked Jesus, "Which of the laws {that God gave us} is the most important?"

29Jesus replied, “Here is the most important law: ‘Listen, you people of Israel! The Lord God whom we worship is the only Lord. **30**You must love the Lord, the God whom we worship, with everything that you desire, everything that you do, everything that you think, and everything that you accomplish.’

31Here is the next most important law: ‘You must care for people you know as much as you care for yourselves.’ No other laws are more important than these two laws!”

32The teacher of the Jewish law replied, “That is a good answer, instructor. You are right when you say that God is the only God and that no other gods exist. **33**Further, we should love God with everything that we desire, everything that we think, and everything that we accomplish. Also, we should care for people we know as much as we care for ourselves. Doing those things is more important than burning or presenting any offering to God.”

34Jesus realized that the teacher of the Jewish law had responded in a wise way. So, Jesus told him, “You are close to participating in God’s kingdom.” After that, nobody was bold enough to ask him any more questions.

35Then, while Jesus was instructing people in the temple area, he asked a question of his own. He said, “Does it make sense when the teachers of the Jewish law claim that the Messiah must be a descendant of King David? **36**{I ask that because} the Holy Spirit caused King David to write that the Lord God said to David’s Lord,

‘Rule with me

while I defeat all of your enemies!’

37So, King David called the Messiah ‘Lord.’ {However, people do not describe their descendants as their lords.} Therefore, how is it possible for the Messiah to be a descendant of King David?”

A very large group of people enjoyed listening to Jesus {say these things}.

38While Jesus was instructing those people, he told them, “Make sure that you do not act like the teachers of the Jewish law. They like to put on long robes and walk around {so they look important}. They also like people to greet them {respectfully} in the open areas of towns. **39**They like to sit in the places for important people when they go to the Jewish meeting places or attend feasts. **40**They steal the property of women whose husbands have died. To make other people think that they are righteous, they pray for a long time. God will punish them very severely.”

41Later, Jesus sat down {in the temple area} in front of the offering boxes that were there. He observed the large group of people drop coins into the boxes. Many wealthy people gave large amounts of money. **42**Then a woman whose husband had died and who did not have much money arrived. She dropped {into one of the offering boxes} two small copper coins. Those two coins together were worth only the least valuable Roman coin.

43-44 Then Jesus told his apprentices to come to him. He told them, “Most of these people have a lot of money, but they gave only a small part of it. However, this woman, who does not have very much money, has given all the money that she had to pay for the things she needs. So, she has given to God more than what everyone else gave! What I have said is true.”

Chapter 13

1After that, Jesus {and his apprentices} left the temple area. {As they were walking,} one of his apprentices said to him, “Instructor, pay attention to how marvelous these huge blocks of stone in the walls are and how beautiful these structures are!”

2Jesus replied, “Look at these impressive structures! Enemies will completely destroy them. They will not leave anything standing.”

3Later, Jesus {and his apprentices} sat down on top of the Mount of Olives in front of the temple. When no one else was with them, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Jesus, **4**"Please explain to us when what you have described will happen. Also, {please explain to us} how we can tell when everything that you have described is about to happen."

5Jesus started to reply, "Make sure that no one deceives you! **6**Many people will meet you and say that God has authorized them as he has authorized me. They will say that they are {the Messiah}. {By doing that,} they will deceive many people. **7**Whenever people tell you about wars that are happening and about wars that could happen, do not be afraid. Things like that have to happen. However, what I have said about the temple will not yet happen. **8**Further, groups of people will attack each other. Earthquakes will happen in many places. Many people will not have enough food to eat. Those events are like the first pains a pregnant woman feels when she is going to have a child. They are bad, but many more bad things will still happen after them.

9Make sure that you are ready {for what people will do to you}. They will arrest you and accuse you in front of groups of important people. They will beat you in the Jewish meeting places. Because you are my apprentices, people will accuse you before local rulers and kings. That way, you will tell those rulers {about me}. **10**Indeed, my apprentices must preach the good news to all groups of people before {what I have said about the temple will happen}. **11**Whenever people arrest you and then accuse you, do not worry about how you will respond. In fact, you will not speak for yourselves. Instead, the Holy Spirit {will speak through you}. So, you should say whatever God reveals to you at that time. **12**{During this time,} men will have someone arrest their own brothers, and they will ask the judge to execute them. Fathers {will do the same thing} to their own children. Children will rebel against their parents and cause them to die. **13**Because you are my apprentices, many people will be hostile to you. However, if you persevere {in being my apprentices} while people harm you, God will rescue you.

14At some point, you will realize that the detestable thing that destroys is where it does not belong." (Anyone who is reading this should know what Jesus meant.) "When you realize that, those of you who are in the region of Judea should escape to the hilly areas nearby. **15**Those of you who are outside your homes should not go back into your homes to get anything. **16**Those of you who are working in fields should not go back home to get your coats. **17**When what I have described happens, how terrible it will be for pregnant women and for nursing mothers! **18-19**People will suffer very severely when what I have described happens. People have not suffered that severely since God created everything up to now, and no one will ever suffer that severely again. So, ask God to keep these things from occurring during the winter season{, when it is difficult to travel}. **20**Suppose that the Lord {God} were to allow what I have described to continue. In that case, nobody would survive. However, because of the people whom he has chosen {to belong to him}, God will not allow what I have described to continue. **21-22**While those things are happening, there will be people who lie when they claim to be the Messiah or to speak for God. They will do amazing miracles. They will try to deceive the people whom God has chosen {to belong to him}, and they will almost succeed in doing so. Therefore, when people tell you that the Messiah is here or there, do not trust {what they say}. **23**Make sure that you are ready {for what will happen}. I have warned you about this before it happens!

24While what I have described is happening, once people suffer in the ways I have described, God will cause the sun to become dark. The moon will not shine. **25**Stars will drop down from the sky. God will disrupt the angels in heaven. **26**After that, people will see me, the Son of Man, arriving by means of clouds. I will be very powerful and great. **27**After that, I will tell the angels to collect the people whom I have chosen. They will collect them from every place that exists.

28Listen to this story about how fig trees grow. Whenever they begin to produce new branches and leaves, you can tell that it is almost the summer season. **29**Similarly, whenever you realize that what I have described is happening, you can tell that I will act very soon. **30**Most of the people who are alive right now will still be alive when what I have described happens. What I have said is true. **31**Everything that God has created will eventually change or disappear. However, what I have said will never change or disappear. **32**However, as for when {I will return to this world}, no human being knows that. The angels who dwell in heaven do not know that. Even I, the Son, do not know that. Only God my Father knows that. **33**So, you do not know at what moment I will return to this world. Because of that,

you need to make sure that you are ready. You need to focus and pray. **34**{Here is a story} that illustrates {what I mean}. A man decided to travel to a different country. Before he left home, he authorized each of his servants to do something specific {to manage the household}. Then, he told the man who guarded the house to be ready {for him to return}. **35**So then, I am like the man who owned that house. You cannot know at what moment I will return {to this world}. It might be at sunset or at midnight. It might be very early in the morning or after sunrise. Because of that, you need to be ready {at all times}. **36**Otherwise, when I return {to this world} when you do not expect me, I might discover that you are not ready {for me}. **37**I am telling you that you need to be ready {at all times}. In fact, I am telling that to all people!"

Chapter 14

1At that time, it was only two days until the Passover festival, which was the first day of the Celebration of Unleavened Bread. The ruling priests and the teachers of the Jewish law were planning a clever way to arrest Jesus and have people execute him. **2**{They were planning something clever} because they agreed that they would not act during the festival period. Otherwise, the people who were there in Jerusalem might riot.

3Now Jesus was in the village of Bethany. He was in the home of Simon, who used to have a skin disease. While Jesus was feasting {there}, a woman arrived. She brought with her a stone jar that contained nard, a very valuable, fragrant ointment. She shattered the jar and poured the ointment on Jesus' head.

4Some of the people there were very upset. {They said} to each other, "She wasted the fragrant ointment! **5**She could have sold this fragrant ointment for at least 300 coins! Then, she could have given {that money} to poor people." So, they rebuked her.

6However, Jesus told {those people}, "Stop rebuking this woman. Do not bother her! What she did for me was right. **7**There will always be poor people with you, so you can help them whenever you want to. However, I will not always be with you. **8**This woman used what she possessed to do {something for me}. When she poured this ointment on me, she was preparing me ahead of time for when someone buries me. **9**In every place where my apprentices proclaim the good news, they will also tell what this woman just did. That way, people will remember her. What I have said is true."

10Then Judas Iscariot visited the ruling priests to talk about helping them arrest Jesus. He was one of the 12 men whom Jesus had chosen to represent him. **11**When the ruling priests heard from Judas, they were very happy. They agreed to pay money to Judas {to help them arrest Jesus}. So, Judas tried to find a good time to help {the ruling priests} arrest Jesus.

12Then it was the first day of the Celebration of Unleavened Bread, the time when people slaughter lambs for the Passover festival. Jesus' apprentices asked him, "Where should we go to set up the meal for the Passover celebration?"

13So, Jesus told two of his apprentices {to prepare everything}. He instructed them, "Enter the city of Jerusalem. There you will encounter a certain man. He will be holding a jar with water in it. Go wherever he does. **14**When he goes into a house, tell the man who owns the house, 'Our instructor wants to eat the meal for the Passover celebration with us, his apprentices. He asks you to show us the room that is ready for him.' **15**He will take you to a large room that is upstairs. It will already have everything that we need for preparing and eating a meal. Then, set up the meal for us in that room."

16So the two apprentices went away and entered the city of Jerusalem. Everything that Jesus had spoken about happened. Then they set up the meal for the Passover celebration. **17**When it was evening, Jesus arrived at that house with his 12 representatives.

18Then, they began to feast. As they ate, Jesus told them, "One of you is going to help {my enemies} arrest me. This person is eating with me right now! What I have said is true."

19The apprentices started to become sad. One after another they told Jesus, “I will not do that!”

20Jesus responded, “One of you 12 men whom I have chosen to represent me {will do that}. It is one of you who is sharing food from this dish with me. **21**{I say that} because I, the Son of Man, will die. That is what you can read in the Scriptures about me. Nevertheless, how terrible it will be for the man who helps {my enemies} arrest me, the Son of Man. In fact, that man would be better off if he had never existed.”

22Then, as they ate, Jesus picked up a loaf of bread. He thanked God {for the loaf of bread}. He tore it into pieces and handed the pieces to the apprentices {to eat}. He said, “This {bread} is my body. Receive it.”

23Then Jesus picked up a cup {of wine}. He thanked God {for the wine}. Then, he handed {the cup of wine} to the apprentices. All of them drank wine from it.

24Then Jesus told them, “This wine is my blood, which inaugurates the agreement {God is making with you}. My blood will flow from my body {when my enemies kill me}. That will help many people. **25**I will no longer drink any more wine until the time when I drink it again when we participate together in God’s kingdom. What I have said is true.” **26**After they sang a song praising God, Jesus and his apprentices walked to the Mount of Olives.

27Then Jesus told them, “{God had Zechariah} write in the Scriptures,

‘I will kill the one who is like a shepherd.

Then, the people who are like sheep will flee.’

So, all of you will reject me! **28**However, once God has made me alive again, I will go ahead of you to the region of Galilee {and meet you there}.”

29Then Peter told Jesus, “Suppose that everyone else rejects you. Despite that, I will never {do that}!”

30Jesus replied, “During this day, tonight, before a male chicken crows two times, you will say three times that you are not my apprentice! What I have said is true.”

31Peter replied strongly, “I will always say that I am your apprentice, even if I die with you because of that!” The rest {of the apprentices} said similar things.

32After that, Jesus and his apprentices walked to a place that people call Gethsemane. He told the apprentices, “Stay here while I pray {to God}.” **33**Jesus had Peter, James, and John go with him. Then, Jesus started to become very anxious and upset. **34**He told those three apprentices, “I am so sad that I feel like I am dying. Stay here and stay awake!”

35After saying that, Jesus walked a little further. Then, he kneeled down to pray. He asked God to prevent him from experiencing what was about to happen, if there was any way to do so. **36**He prayed, “Abba (which means Father), you are able to do anything. Please prevent me from suffering terribly. However, please do what you want to do, not what I want you to do.”

37Then he returned {to the three apprentices}. He discovered that they were asleep. He {woke them up and} told Peter, “Simon, it disappoints me that you were asleep. You could not stay awake for even a short time! **38**You {men} want to do what I say, but you are not strong enough. Stay awake and pray! That way, nothing can convince you to sin.”

39Then Jesus walked a short distance away a second time. He prayed again what he had prayed previously. **40**Then he returned a second time {to the three apprentices}. He discovered that they, because they were so sleepy, had fallen asleep again. They did not know how to respond to him {when he woke them up}.

41{After Jesus walked away and prayed again}, he returned a third time {to the three apprentices}. He {woke them up and} told them, “It disappoints me that you continue to sleep! You have slept enough. The time {when I will

suffer} is beginning! Someone is about to help sinful people arrest me, the Son of Man. **42**Stand up! We are going to leave {this place}. The person who is helping {my enemies} arrest me has arrived!"

43While Jesus was still talking {to the three apprentices}, Judas came. He was one of the 12 men whom Jesus had chosen to represent him. {He brought} with him a large group of people carrying swords and clubs. The ruling priests, the teachers of the Jewish law, and the other Jewish leaders had sent them {to arrest Jesus}.

44Previously, Judas, who was helping {Jesus' enemies} arrest him, told the group of people how they would know which man was Jesus. He instructed them, "The man you should arrest is the one whom I will greet affectionately. Guard him while you take him away."

45As soon as he arrived, Judas went to Jesus and said, "Teacher!" and he greeted Jesus affectionately. **46**Then the large group of people arrested Jesus.

47One of the men who were there pulled his sword {out of its sheath}. He attacked a man who served the ruling priest, but he {only} cut off that man's ear. **48**Jesus responded by saying to the group of people, "You did not need to treat me like a dangerous bandit by arming yourselves with swords and clubs to arrest me. **49**Each day I was instructing people in the temple area, and you were there. You did not arrest me then! However, {as these things have happened}, what you can read in the Scriptures has come true." **50**Then all {the apprentices} deserted Jesus and ran away. **51**Now there was a young man there. He was wearing only one thin garment. He had been walking around with Jesus. The people who arrested Jesus tried to arrest him too. **52**However, {he escaped by} slipping out of his garment, and he ran away naked.

53The people who had arrested Jesus took him to {the house where} the ruling priest {lived}. All the ruling priests, the other Jewish leaders, and the teachers of the Jewish law assembled there. **54**Peter followed Jesus, but he stayed a safe distance away. {He went} into the area just outside {the house where} the ruling priest {lived}. He sat there with the servants near a fire to keep from getting cold.

55The ruling priests and all {the rest of} the Jewish council tried to find something for which they could accuse Jesus. That way, they could have {the Roman authorities} execute him. However, they did not find {anything for which they could accuse him}. **56**In fact, many people said what was untrue about Jesus. However, these people did not agree about what Jesus had done.

57Then, some other people got up to say what was untrue about Jesus. They declared, **58**"We heard him tell people that he would tear down this temple, which humans have built. Then he said that within three days he would construct another temple that God, not humans, would build." **59**However, even these people did not agree about exactly what Jesus had said.

60Then the ruling priest got up in front of everyone. He asked Jesus, "Are you going to reply? How do you respond to what these people have said about you?" **61**Despite that, Jesus kept quiet. Then the ruling priest asked him another question. He asked, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of {the God} whom we praise?"

62Jesus replied, "That is who I am. You will see me, the Son of Man, ruling powerfully with God. {You will see me} arriving by means of clouds."

63When he heard that, the ruling priest was so upset that he ripped his clothes. He said, "We certainly do not need anyone else to say anything about him. **64**You have heard him insult God! What do you think we should do?" The whole Jewish council agreed that he was guilty and that someone should execute him because of what he had said.

65Then some of them started to spit on Jesus {to insult him}. They covered his eyes and then struck him {with their fists}. They demanded, "Speak for God!" When the servants led Jesus away, they slapped him.

66Meanwhile, Peter was down in the area just outside the {ruling priest's} house. A female servant, one of the servants who served the ruling priest, was there. **67**She noticed Peter, who was near a fire to keep from getting

cold. She stared at him and declared, “{I can tell that} you were an apprentice of Jesus, that man from the town of Nazareth.”

68However, he told her that he was not Jesus’ apprentice. He said, “I do not at all understand what you are talking about!”

Then Peter left {the area just outside the house and walked} to the place where people entered that area. **69**The female servant noticed him again, and she started to tell the people who were there, “This man belongs to {Jesus’} group.”

70However, Peter again said that he was not Jesus’ apprentice. A little later, some people who were there told Peter, “You are from Galilee, {where Jesus is from}. So, you really must belong to {Jesus’} group.”

71Then Peter started to ask God to punish him if he was lying. He solemnly promised, “I have never met the man about whom you are speaking!”

72As soon as he said that, a male chicken crowed for a second time. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had told him. He had said, “Before a male chicken crows two times, you will say three times that you are not my apprentice.” Then Peter became very upset. He cried.

Chapter 15

1As soon as it was morning, the entire Jewish council, including the ruling priests, the other Jewish leaders, and the teachers of the Jewish law, planned {what to do with Jesus}. They had their guards tie Jesus up and take him from there to Pilate{, the Roman local ruler}. They wanted Pilate to condemn him.

2Pilate asked Jesus, “Do you claim to be king over the Jewish people?”

Jesus replied, “What you are calling me is right.”

3Then the ruling priests claimed that Jesus had done many bad things. **4**After that, Pilate again spoke to Jesus. He said, “Listen to all the bad things they claim that you have done! Are you going to reply?”

5However, Jesus did not respond anymore. How Jesus was acting greatly impressed Pilate.

6It is important to know that during the festival period, Pilate usually set free one person who was in jail. {He set free} whomever the people who were in the city of Jerusalem chose. **7**It is also important to know that a man whose name was Barabbas was in jail with some other men who had rebelled against the Roman government. While they were rebelling, they had murdered some people. **8**The large group of people {who were there} approached Pilate. They started to ask him {to set someone free}, as he usually did for them.

9Pilate replied, “Would you like for me to set free for you the man who claims to be king over you Jewish people?” **10**{Pilate asked that question} because he realized that the ruling priests had arrested Jesus and brought him to Pilate because they were jealous {of Jesus}.

11However, the ruling priests convinced the large group of people {to ask} Pilate to free Barabbas rather than {Jesus}. **12**Then Pilate again replied, “So what do you want me to do with the person whom you claim is king over you Jewish people?”

13The large group of people shouted, “{Have your soldiers} kill him by nailing him to a cross!”

14Pilate replied, “But he has not done anything wrong!”

However, they shouted even louder, “{Have your soldiers} kill him by nailing him to a cross!”

15Pilate decided to do what the large group of people wanted. So, he set Barabbas free. Then, he had his soldiers whip Jesus and take him away to kill him by nailing him to a cross.

16After that, Pilate's soldiers took Jesus into the area just outside {Pilate's palace}. That place was their headquarters. They summoned the rest of the soldiers who were there. **17**They clothed Jesus with a purple robe{, the kind that kings wear}. Also, they took some branches with thorns and laced them together to make a crown. They put it on Jesus' head. **18**Then the soldiers started {to mock him by} saying hello to him. They said, "Greetings, you who claim to be king over the Jewish people!" **19**They kept hitting Jesus' head with a staff. They kept spitting on Jesus {to insult him}. They bowed down in front of him {to pretend} to honor him. **20**After the soldiers made fun of Jesus, they pulled the purple robe off of him. They put his own clothes back on him. Then, some of the soldiers took him {from there to the place where} they were going to kill him by nailing him to a cross.

21Meanwhile, a man was walking nearby. He had left the farm areas {and was entering the city of Jerusalem}. He was from the city of Cyrene, and his name was Simon. His sons were Alexander and Rufus. The soldiers forced this man to carry the cross for Jesus. **22**The soldiers took Jesus to a place {that people called} Golgotha. That name means "Skull Place." **23**The soldiers offered Jesus wine into which they had mixed a resin that people called 'myrrh.' However, Jesus refused to drink it. **24**After nailing Jesus to the cross, the soldiers split up his clothes by gambling for them. They did that to determine which piece of clothing each soldier would get.

25It was nine o'clock in the morning when they nailed Jesus to the cross. **26**The soldiers wrote on a sign why {they were executing Jesus}. Here is what they wrote: "The king over the Jewish people."

27The soldiers also nailed two bandits to crosses near Jesus. They put one bandit on one side of Jesus and the other bandit on the other side of Jesus. **28**[{When those things happened}, what someone wrote in the Scriptures came true: "People considered him to be one of the people who do what is wrong."]

29The people who walked past Jesus insulted him by shaking their heads {at him}. They said {to him}, "Ha! You said that you could tear down God's temple and construct it again within three days. **30**So, rescue yourself by getting down from that cross!"

31Similarly, the ruling priests and the teachers of the Jewish law made fun of Jesus among themselves. They declared, "He has rescued other people. However, he cannot rescue himself! **32**{He claims to be} the Messiah and the king over the people of Israel. So, he should get down now from that cross! That way, when we watch {him do that}, we will accept what he says." The two men whom the soldiers had nailed to crosses near Jesus also insulted him.

33When it was noon, it became dark in that whole area. {It stayed dark} until three o'clock in the afternoon. **34**At three o'clock in the afternoon, Jesus shouted, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" That means, "My God, my God, why did you abandon me?"

35Some people who were there heard {what Jesus said and misunderstood it}. They declared, "Listen! He is speaking to the prophet Elijah!"

36Then one man quickly went to soak a sponge in sour wine. He attached the sponge to the top of a staff. Then, he held it up to Jesus so that Jesus could suck {the sour wine} from it. Then the man said, "Do not do anything else for him! We should wait to find out whether Elijah appears to help him get down." **37**After that, Jesus shouted loudly. Then he stopped breathing and he died. **38**And then the drape hanging {in front of the Most Holy Place} in the temple ripped in half; it tore from the top to the bottom.

39There was a Roman officer standing there in front of Jesus. He observed how Jesus stopped breathing and died. He exclaimed, "This man really was God's Son!" **40**{While all that was happening,} some women were there. They observed {what was happening} from farther away. These women included Salome, Mary from the town of Magdala, and Mary who was the mother of young James and Joses. **41**When Jesus was in the region of Galilee,

these women had gone with him as his apprentices and had taken care of him. Additionally, many other women were there {observing what was happening}. They had walked to the city of Jerusalem with Jesus.

42-43 Now there was a man from the city of Arimathea whose name was Joseph. He was a member of the Jewish council, and people respected him. He too was eagerly expecting God's kingdom. When he arrived {in the city of Jerusalem}, it was Preparation Day, the day before the Jewish day of rest, and the evening had already begun. Because {it was Preparation Day}, this man went boldly to Pilate. He asked Pilate to allow him to take Jesus' body {to bury it}. **44**When Pilate heard that Jesus might already be dead, it surprised him. So, he summoned the Roman officer {who was in charge of executing Jesus}. Pilate asked the officer, "Is Jesus already dead?" **45**When the officer told Pilate {that Jesus was certainly dead}, Pilate {had his soldiers} give Jesus' body to Joseph. **46**So, Joseph purchased a fresh sheet of cloth. Then, he removed Jesus' body {from the cross}. He {prepared to bury it by} winding the fresh sheet of cloth around it. Then, Joseph put Jesus' body into a grave that Joseph's workers had made by digging into a rock cliff. After that, Joseph rolled a flat stone to block the entrance to the grave. **47**{While that was happening,} Mary from the town of Magdala and Mary who was the mother of Joses observed where Joseph had placed Jesus' body.

Chapter 16

1When the Jewish day of rest was over, Salome, Mary from the town of Magdala, and Mary, who was the mother of James, purchased fragrant ointments. They planned to visit {Jesus' grave} and pour the ointments on his body {to finish burying him properly}. **2**At dawn on Sunday morning, the three women visited Jesus' tomb. **3**{As they were walking,} they asked each other, "Who will help us by rolling the flat stone to open the entrance to the grave?"

4{When they arrived,} they looked {at the grave} and noticed that someone had already rolled the flat stone {to open the entrance to the grave}. And that flat stone was huge! **5**Then, the three women walked into the grave, where they saw a young man. He was wearing a white robe and was sitting down to their right. What they saw startled them!

6The young man told them, "Do not let what you see startle you! {I know that} you are looking for the body of Jesus from the town of Nazareth. He was the one whom soldiers killed by nailing him to a cross. God has made him alive again! He is no longer in this grave. Look at where people placed his body. **7**Now depart to his apprentices and tell them, especially Peter, that Jesus is going ahead of them to the region of Galilee. {Tell them that} Jesus will meet them there, which is what Jesus already told them."

8The three women were shaking because what had happened amazed them. So they left the grave and ran away. Because they felt afraid, they did not speak to anyone {about what had happened}.

9[When Jesus lived again early on Sunday morning, Mary from the town of Magdala was the first person to see him. Jesus had forced seven demons out of her. **10**She approached Jesus' apprentices, who were grieving very much. She told them {what she had seen}. **11**So, the apprentices learned that Jesus was alive and that Mary had seen him. However, they did not accept what she said.

12Sometime later, two of Jesus' apprentices were traveling to farm areas. They saw Jesus, although he looked different. **13**Then, the two apprentices went back {to Jerusalem}. They told the other apprentices what had happened, but the others did not accept what the two apprentices said.

14Sometime later, Jesus revealed himself to his 11 representatives while they were eating. Because they had not accepted it when people told them that they had seen Jesus after God made him alive again, Jesus scolded them. He told them that they should not have stubbornly refused to accept what those people said.

15Then he told them, "Visit every place and proclaim the good news to every person! **16**God will rescue all people who trust in me and who have someone baptize them. However, God will punish all people who do not trust in me. **17**I will enable those who trust in me to perform miracles. Specifically, they will represent me by forcing demons out

{of people}. They will talk in languages that they have not learned. **18**They will be able to hold snakes and drink poison without becoming sick or dying. When they touch sick people, it will cure them."

19After the Lord Jesus said that to his apprentices, God brought him up into heaven. There, Jesus sat down to rule with God {the Father}. **20**As for the apprentices, they left {Jerusalem} and proclaimed {the good news} in every place. The Lord {Jesus} helped them and enabled them to perform miracles. That way, people could see that the good news was true. May it be so!]

Luke

Chapter 1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

46Then Mary praised God by saying:

"Oh, how I praise the Lord

47and I feel very joyful about God,

the one who saves me!

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

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

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

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

51He has shown people that he is very powerful.

He has routed those who think proudly within themselves.

52He has made rulers stop ruling,

but he has honored people who are lowly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

57When it was time for Elizabeth to give birth to her child, she bore a son. **58**When her neighbors and relatives heard about how kind the Lord had been to her by giving her a son, they were very happy along with Elizabeth.
59Eight days later, people gathered together for the ceremony to circumcise the baby {to show that he belonged to God}. {This was also the time to give the baby a name.} The people wanted to name the baby Zechariah because that was his father's name. **60**But his mother said, "No, {his name will not be Zechariah.} His name will be John!"
61So they said to her, "But John is not the name of any of your relatives!" **62**Then they made motions with their hands to his father, asking him to indicate what name he wanted to give to his son. **63**So he signaled that they should give him a tablet to write on. {When they gave him one,} he wrote on it, "His name is John." This amazed all of the people who were there! **64**Immediately, Zechariah was able to speak again, and he began praising God.
65{When} the people who lived nearby {heard about these things, they} felt a deep reverence for God. {They told many other people about what had happened,} and this news spread to people throughout the highlands of Judea.
66Everyone who heard about these things kept thinking about them. They thought, "Certainly this child will grow up to be someone very special!" {They thought this} because {they could see that} the Lord was present in his life in a powerful way. **67**After the child's father, Zechariah, could speak again, the Holy Spirit inspired Zechariah and he spoke these words from God:

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

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

69He has sent someone who will powerfully save us,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

76{Then Zechariah said to his baby son,}

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

of the Most High God.

You will begin your work before the Lord comes

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 2

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

33Jesus’ father and mother marveled at what Simeon said about him. **34**Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Jesus’ mother, Mary, “Note well what I say: God has determined that, because of this child, many people in Israel will reject God and many will submit themselves to God. He will be a sign {from God} that many people will oppose. **35**As for you, {the cruel things that people will do to him will make you so sad that} it will feel as if a sword is piercing through your very soul. {But this is necessary} so that he can reveal the secret thoughts of many people.”

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 3

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

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

'Prepare yourselves to receive the Lord!

Make yourselves ready for when he comes!'

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

They make the road straight wherever it is crooked,

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

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

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

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

Chapter 4

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

18"The Spirit of the Lord is empowering me,

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

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

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

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

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

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

31From there Jesus went down to Capernaum, a city in the district of Galilee. On each Jewish day of rest, he taught the people {in the Jewish meeting place there}. **32**The things that Jesus taught the people amazed them, because he spoke as someone who knew what he was talking about. **33**Now in that Jewish meeting place there was a man whom an evil spirit controlled. He shouted very loudly, **34**"Aah! Jesus, from Nazareth! What do you want with us? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are! You are the Holy One from God!" **35**But Jesus spoke sternly to the evil spirit. He said, "Be quiet and come out of him!" The evil spirit threw the man down on the ground in the

middle of the people. But then he came out of the man, without harming him. **36**All of the people {in the Jewish meeting place} were amazed. Many of them said to each other, “We have never seen anything like this! His words are so powerful! He commands the evil spirits as if they must obey him, and {when he commands them,} they come out {of people}!” **37**In every place throughout the surrounding region, people kept talking about what Jesus had done.

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

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

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

Chapter 5

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

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

17One day when Jesus was teaching, some men from the Pharisee sect and some expert teachers of the Jewish law were sitting nearby. They had come from many villages in the district of Galilee and also from Jerusalem and other cities in the province of Judea. At that same time, the Lord was giving Jesus the power to heal people. **18**While Jesus was there, several men brought him a man who was paralyzed{. They were carrying the man} on a sleeping pad and trying to bring him into the house to lay him down in front of Jesus. **19**But because there was such a large crowd of people in the house, they were not able to bring him in. So they went up {the outside steps} onto the flat roof. {They removed some of the tiles from the roof to make an opening.} Then they lowered the man on his sleeping pad through the opening into the middle {of the crowd}. He came down right in front of Jesus. **20**When Jesus perceived that they believed that he could heal the man, he said to him, “Friend, I forgive your sins!” **21**The teachers of the law and the Pharisees began to think to themselves, “This man insults God by saying that! Nobody except God can forgive sins!” **22**Jesus knew what they were thinking. So he said to them, “You should not question what I said within yourselves! **23**Here is something I want you to think carefully about. Which is easier to say, ‘I forgive your sins,’ or, ‘Get up and walk’? {You might think that saying ‘I forgive your sins’ is easier because it does not require any visible proof.} **24**But I want you to know that God has given me, the Son of Man, authority to forgive people on earth their sins. {To demonstrate that, I will also tell this man to get up.}” Then he said to the man who was paralyzed, “To you I say, get up, pick up your sleeping pad, and go home!” **25**Immediately {the man was healed!} He got up in front of them all. He picked up the sleeping pad on which he had been lying, and he went home, praising God. **26**All the people there were astonished! They praised God and were completely amazed {at what they had seen Jesus do}. They kept saying, “We have seen wonderful things today!”

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 6

1One Sabbath day, as Jesus and his disciples were walking through some grain fields, the disciples picked some heads of grain. They rubbed them in their hands to separate the grain from the husks. Then they ate the grain. **2**Some Pharisees {were watching this. They} said {to them}, “You should not be doing work like that! Our law forbids us to do work on the Sabbath day!” **3**Jesus replied to the Pharisees, “Consider what the Scriptures say about what David did when he and the men who were with him were hungry. **4**As you know, David entered the tabernacle {and asked for some food}. The priest gave him the bread that had been on display before God. David ate some, and he also gave some to the men who were with him, even though the law said they could not do that. Only priests could eat that bread.” **5**Jesus also said to them, “I, the Son of Man, have the authority {to determine what is right for people to do} on the Sabbath!”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

43Everyone knows that healthy trees do not produce bad fruit and unhealthy trees do not produce good fruit.
44You can tell what a person is like inside by the things that they do. {Then you know what to expect from them.
You would not look for kindness or good advice from someone who does bad things.} That would be like looking
for figs on a thornbush or looking for grapes on a bramble vine. **45**Good people do good things because they think
good things. Evil people do evil things because they think evil things. This is because people speak and act based
on what they are thinking about."

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

Chapter 7

1After Jesus finished saying all these things to the people who were listening, he went to the town of Capernaum.
2In that town there was a centurion in the Roman army who had a slave who was dear to him. This slave was so sick that he was about to die. **3**When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to Jesus to ask him to come and heal his slave. **4**When they came to Jesus, they earnestly asked him {to help the centurion's slave}. They said, "He deserves to have you do this for him, **5**because he loves our people and he built our synagogue for us." **6**So Jesus went with them {to the officer's house}. When he was almost there, the officer sent some friends to give this message to Jesus: "Lord, do not go to the trouble {of coming here}, since I am not worthy to have you come into my house. **7**That is why I did not feel that I was worthy to come to you in person. I knew that you could heal my dear slave just by speaking {a command}. **8**{I know that you can do this} because I myself am a man who must obey the orders of my superiors. I also have soldiers who must obey my orders. When I say to one of them, 'Go!' he goes. When I say to another one, 'Come!' he comes. When I say to my slave, 'Do this!' he does it." **9**When Jesus heard what the officer had said, he was amazed at him. Then he turned to the crowd that was with him and said, "Let me tell you, I have not met any Israelite who trusts me as much as this Gentile does!" **10**When the friends who had come from the centurion returned to his house, they found that the slave was in good health again.

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

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

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

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

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

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

36One day a certain Pharisee named Simon invited Jesus to eat a meal with him. So Jesus went to the man’s house
and reclined at a table to eat. **37**There was also a woman in that city who had a bad reputation. When she heard
that Jesus was eating in the Pharisee’s house, {she went there,} bringing a stone jar that contained perfume. **38**{As
Jesus was reclining to eat, the woman stood behind him at his feet.} She was crying, and her tears fell on Jesus’
feet. She continually wiped his feet with her hair. She kept kissing them and anointing them with the perfume.
39When the Pharisee who had invited Jesus saw {what the woman was doing}, he thought, “If this man really were
a prophet, he would have known who this woman is who is touching him. He would have known what kind of
person she is, that she is a sinner.” **40**In response, Jesus said to him, “Simon, there is something I want to tell you.”
He replied, “Teacher, what is it?” **41**{Jesus told him this story:} “Two people owed money to a man who had a
business lending money. One of these people owed him 500 silver coins. The other one owed him 50 silver coins.
42Neither of them was able to pay back what he owed, so the man very kindly said that they both did not have to
pay back anything. So, which of those two men will love that man more?” **43**Simon replied, “I assume that the one
who had owed him the larger amount will love him more.” Jesus said to him, “You are correct.” **44**Then he turned
toward the woman and said to Simon, “Think about what this woman has done! When I entered your house{, you
did not do what hosts usually do to welcome their guests.} You did not give me any water to wash my feet. But this
woman has washed my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair! **45**You did not greet me with a kiss. But
from the moment I came in, she has not stopped kissing my feet! **46**You did not anoint my head with olive oil, but
she has anointed my feet with fragrant perfume. **47**So I tell you that God has forgiven her many sins, and that is
why she loves me very much. But a person who thinks that God has only had to forgive him for a few sins will love
me only a little bit.” **48**Then Jesus said to the woman, “I have forgiven your sins.” **49**Then those who were eating with
him said among themselves, “Who is this man who says that he can even forgive sins?” **50**But Jesus said to the
woman, “Because you have believed in me, God has saved you. May God give you peace as you go!”

Chapter 8

1After that, Jesus and his 12 representatives traveled around through various cities and villages. As they went, Jesus
preached to people, telling them the good news that they could have God rule their lives. **2**{Also traveling with
them were} several women whom he had delivered from evil spirits and healed from sicknesses. These included
Mary from the village of Magdala. Jesus had forced seven evil spirits to leave her. **3**{Another of these women was}
Joanna. She was the wife of Chuza, who was a manager for King Herod. {These women also included} Susanna and
many others. They were using their own money to support Jesus and his disciples.

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

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

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

11Now, this is what the story means: The seeds represent what God wants people to understand. **12**The seeds that fell on the pathway {show what happens when} people understand the message from God only superficially. This makes it easy for the devil to come and take that message away from their minds. As a result, they do not believe it, and so God does not save them. **13**The seeds that fell on the rocky ground {show what happens when} people hear the message from God and receive it joyfully, but they do not commit themselves seriously. They only believe for a short time. As soon as difficult things happen to them, they stop trusting in God. **14**The seeds that fell among the thorny plants {show what happens to some other} people who hear the message from God. As they go on in life, they allow the worries, riches, and pleasures of this life to occupy all their attention. As a result, they do not become spiritually mature. **15**But the seeds that fell on the fertile ground {show what happens when} people hear the message about God and accept it with great sincerity. They make a firm commitment, and because they keep this commitment, they become spiritually mature.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

8:43 [1]

Chapter 9

1Then Jesus called together his 12 representatives and gave them the right and power to drive out all kinds of demons and to heal {people's} diseases. **2**He sent them out to announce {the good news about} how God would rule as king. He told them to heal people who were sick. **3**{Before they left,} he said to them, "Do not take anything with you for your journey. Do not take a walking stick or a traveler's bag or food or money. Do not bring an extra tunic. **4**Whatever house you enter, stay in that house until you leave that area. **5**If the people in any town do not welcome you, you should not stay there. Instead, leave that town and, as you go, shake its dust off your feet. That

will be a warning to them {for rejecting you}." **6**Then Jesus' disciples left and traveled through many villages. Everywhere they went, they talked to people about the good news from God, and they healed sick people.

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

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

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

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

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

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

disciples were afraid as the cloud surrounded them. **35**God's voice spoke to them from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him!" **36**When the voice had finished speaking, {the three disciples saw that} only Jesus was there. They kept all this to themselves. For a long time they did not tell anyone what they had seen.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 10

1After that, Jesus appointed 72 other disciples {to go and prepare people to hear him}. He sent them out in pairs to go ahead of him to every town and village where he was intending to go himself. **2**He said to them, "Many people

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

neighbor as much as you love yourself.” **28**Jesus told him, “You have answered correctly. If you do all that, you will live {with God forever}.”

29But the man wanted to show that God would approve of him. So he said to Jesus, “Which people are my neighbors {whom I should love}?” **30**Jesus replied, “One day, a Jewish man was traveling along the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. Some bandits attacked him. They took away most of the man’s clothes and everything else that he had. They beat him until he was almost dead. Then they left him there. **31**It happened that a {Jewish} priest was going along that road. When he saw that man, {instead of helping him,} he passed by on the other side of the road. **32**Similarly, a Levite {who worked in God’s temple} also came to that place and saw the man. But he too passed by on the other side of the road. **33**Then a man from the region of Samaria came along that road to where the man was lying. When he saw that man, he pitied him. **34**He went over to him and put some olive oil and wine on his wounds {to help heal them}. He wrapped strips of cloth around the wounds. Then he put the man on his own donkey and brought him to an inn and took care of him. **35**The next morning he gave two silver coins to the innkeeper and said, ‘Take care of this man. If you need to spend more than this amount to care for him, I will pay you back when I return.’” **36**{Then Jesus asked,} “Three people found the man whom the bandits had attacked. Which one of them would you say was a true neighbor to that man?” **37**The teacher of the law replied, “The one who acted mercifully toward him.” Jesus said to him, “{That is correct.} So you should go and act like that toward anyone who needs your help.”

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

Chapter 11

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

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

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

21{Jesus continued,} "When a strong man who has many weapons guards his own house, no one can steal the
things inside. **22**But when someone else who is stronger attacks that man and subdues him, he takes away the
weapons that the man was depending on. Then he can steal anything he wants from that man's house. **23**Anyone
who is not supporting me is opposing me. Anyone who is not bringing people to me is sending them away from
me."

24{Then Jesus said,} "An evil spirit might leave someone and wander around in desolate areas looking for someone
else to live in. If it does not find anyone there, it may say, 'I am going to go back to the person I used to live in!' **25**So
it goes back and finds that the person is like a house that someone has swept clean and put in order{, but which
has no one living in it}. **26**Then this evil spirit goes and gets seven other spirits that are even more evil than it is.
They all enter that person and begin living in him. That person's condition was bad before, and it becomes even
worse."

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

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

33People who light a lamp do not hide it or put it under a basket. Instead, they put it on a lampstand so that those
who enter the room can see the light. **34**Your eye lets light into your body. If your eye is working right, then your
whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is not working right, then your body will not get any light.
35Therefore, be careful not to think that your eye is working right and letting in light if it is actually not working
right and not letting in any light. **36**So if light is getting into every part of your body, so that no part of it is in the
dark, then all of your body will be full of light. Bright light will shine all over you inside, just as the bright light of a
lamp shines all over you outside."

37After Jesus finished saying those things, a Pharisee invited him to eat a meal with him. So Jesus went into the
Pharisee's house and reclined at the table to eat. **38**The Pharisee was surprised when he saw that Jesus did not
ritually wash his hands first before eating. **39**Jesus said to him, "You Pharisees wash the outside of cups and dishes
before you eat, but within yourselves you are very greedy and wicked. **40**You foolish people! Surely you know that

God not only made the outside, but also made the inside! **41**{Instead of worrying about dishes being ritually clean, be merciful and} give whatever is inside the dishes to people in need. Then both the inside and outside of you will be acceptable to God.

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

45One of the teachers of the Jewish laws who were there complained to Jesus, "Teacher, when you say things like that, you are criticizing us too!" **46**But Jesus responded, "How terrible it will also be for you who are teachers of the Jewish laws! I say this because you tell people to follow so many rules, yet you will not do even the smallest thing to help them. **47**How terrible it will be for you, because you construct buildings to mark the graves of the prophets, but your ancestors are the ones who killed them! **48**So when you build these buildings, you are declaring that you approve of what your ancestors did when they killed the prophets. **49**So God, who is very wise, also said, 'I will send prophets and messengers to guide my people. But they will cause them to suffer greatly. They will even kill some of them.' **50**As a result, the people living at this time will be punished for the murder of all the prophets whom people have killed since the world was created. **51**They will be punished for every murder from that of {Adam's son} Abel{, whose brother Cain killed him,} right through to the murder of {the prophet} Zechariah, whom the king's agents killed {in the temple} between the altar and the holy place. **52**How terrible it will be for you teachers of the Jewish laws. You are keeping people from knowing about God! You do not know God yourselves, and you make things difficult for other people who want to know God better."

53{After Jesus finished saying those things,} he left the Pharisee's house. Then the teachers of the Jewish laws and the Pharisees began to act in a very hostile way toward him. They questioned him intensely about many things. **54**They kept listening for him to say something wrong so that they could accuse him of false teaching.

Chapter 12

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

41Peter asked, “Lord, are you giving this illustration only for us, your disciples? Or is it for the crowd too?” **42**Jesus
replied, “I am saying it for everyone who is like a faithful and wise servant who is a manager in his master’s house.
His master puts him in charge of his other servants, to make sure they get their food at the proper time. **43**If his
master comes home and sees that he is doing that work, he will reward that servant. **44**Let me tell you this: The
master will put that servant in charge of all he owns. **45**But that servant who was put in charge might say to

himself, ‘My master is going to be away for a long time.’ Then he might start to beat the other servants. He might also start to eat and drink a lot and get drunk. **46**If he does that, his master might return at a time when the servant does not expect him. Then his master will punish him severely and assign him a place with those who do not serve him faithfully. **47**The servant who knew what his master wanted but did not get ready and do it will be severely punished. **48**But every servant who did not know what his master wanted him to do, and then did something wrong, will only get a mild punishment. The master will expect much from all servants to whom he has given much. And the master will expect even more from servants whom he has entrusted with many responsibilities.

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

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

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

Chapter 13

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

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

10On one Jewish day of rest, Jesus was teaching people in one of the synagogues. **11**There was a woman there whom an evil spirit had crippled for 18 years. She was always bent over. She could not stand up straight. **12**When Jesus saw her, he called her over to him. He said to her, “Woman, I have healed you of this illness!” **13**He put his hands on her. Immediately she stood up straight and began praising God! **14**But the leader of the synagogue was angry because Jesus had healed her on the Jewish rest day. So he said to the people, “There are six days each week on which our laws permit people to work. If you need healing, those are the days to come to the synagogue for

someone to heal you. Do not come on our day of rest!" **15**Then Jesus replied to him, "You and your fellow religious leaders are hypocrites! Each of you {also works on the day of rest sometimes! For example, you} untie your ox or donkey to lead it from the stall to a place where it can drink water. **16**This woman is a Jew, descended from Abraham! But Satan has kept her crippled for 18 years, as though he had tied her up! Certainly you would agree that it is right that I free her from this disabling disease, even if I do it on a day of rest!" **17**After he said that, his enemies were ashamed of themselves. But all the other people were happy about all the wonderful things he was doing.

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 14

1One day, which was a day of rest, Jesus went to eat at the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees. {This leader had invited other Pharisees to the same meal.} They were all watching Jesus carefully {to try to find grounds to accuse him}. **2**Right there in front of Jesus was a man who had a disease that caused his arms and legs to be very swollen. **3**Jesus asked the experts in Jewish law and the Pharisees who were present, "Is it permitted in the law to heal people on the day of rest, or not?" **4**They did not reply. So Jesus put his hands on the man and healed him.

Then he told him he could go. **5**And he said to the others there, “If one of you had a son or an ox that fell into a well on the day of rest, you would pull him out immediately.” **6**Again, they were not able to answer him.

7Jesus noticed that the people who had been invited to the meal were choosing to sit in the places where important people usually sit. So he gave this advice to them. **8**“When someone invites one of you to a wedding feast, do not sit in a place where important people sit. It may be that he has invited a person who is more important than you to the feast. **9**When the host who invited both of you sees where you are each sitting, he will say to you, ‘Let this person have your seat!’ Then you will have to take the least important seat, and you will be ashamed. **10**Instead, when someone invites you to a feast, go and sit in the least important seat. Then when the host who invited everyone comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, come sit in a better seat!’ Then all the people who are eating with you will see that he is honoring you. **11**For God will humble those who exalt themselves, and he will exalt those who humble themselves.”

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

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

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

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

Chapter 15

1Now, many tax collectors and other people whom the religious leaders considered to be sinners kept coming to
Jesus to listen to him teach. **2**{When} the Pharisees and teachers of the Jewish laws {saw this, they} began to
grumble. They said, "This man welcomes sinners and even eats with them." {They thought Jesus was defiling
himself by doing that.} **3**So Jesus told them this parable: **4**"Suppose that one of you had 100 sheep and you lost one
of them. Certainly you would leave the 99 other sheep in the wilderness and go search for the lost sheep until you
had found it. **5**When you found it, you would joyfully put it on your shoulders to carry it home. **6**Then when you
arrived home, you would call together your friends and neighbors and say to them: 'Be joyful with me, because I
have found my sheep that was lost!' **7**You should know that, in a similar way, there is great joy among those in
heaven when one sinner repents from his sins. That joy is greater than their joy over many people who are already
right with God and do not need to repent.

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

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

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

Chapter 16

1Jesus also said to his disciples, “Once there was a rich man who had a household manager. One day someone
informed the rich man that the manager was doing such a bad job that the rich man was losing lots of money. **2**So
he called the manager to come to him and said to him, ‘What I hear you have been doing is terrible! Give me a final
written report of the things you have been managing, because you will no longer be my household manager!’
3Then the manager said to himself, ‘My master is going to dismiss me from being his manager, so I have to think of
what to do. I am not strong enough to work by digging ditches, and I am ashamed to beg for money. **4**I know what
I will do so that people will take me into their houses {and provide for me} after he dismisses me from my
management work!’ **5**So he asked everyone who owed his master money to come to him one by one. He asked the
first one, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ **6**The man replied, ‘3,000 liters of olive oil.’ The manager said to him,
‘Take your bill, sit down, and quickly change it to 1, 500 liters!’ **7**He said to another man, ‘How much do you owe?’
The man replied, ‘1,000 baskets of wheat.’ The manager said to him, ‘Take your bill and change it to 800 baskets!’
8{When} the master {heard what his manager had done, he} praised the dishonest manager for being so clever.
The truth is, the people who belong to this world are more clever than the people who belong to God in how they
relate to those around them. **9**I tell you, use the money you have in this world to make friends for yourselves. Then
when that money is gone, those friends will welcome you into their homes, which will last forever. **10**People who
faithfully manage small amounts of money will also be honest with much greater amounts. People who are
dishonest in the way they manage small amounts of money will also be dishonest with much greater amounts.
11So if you have not faithfully handled the money {God has given you} in this world, he will certainly not trust you
with the true riches {of heaven}. **12**If you have not faithfully managed property that belongs to other people, you
should not expect anyone to give you property of your own. **13**No servant is able to serve two different masters at
the same time. If he tried to do that, he would hate one of them and love the other one, or he would be loyal to
one of them and despise the other one. You cannot devote your life to serving God if you are also devoting your life
to acquiring money and other material possessions.”

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

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

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

19{Jesus also said,} “Once there was a rich man who wore expensive purple and linen clothes. Every day he gave
lavish feasts. **20**And {every day} people laid a poor man whose name was Lazarus at the gate of the rich man’s
house. Lazarus’ body was covered with sores. **21**{He was so hungry that} he wanted to eat the scraps of food that
fell from the table where the rich man ate. {While he was lying there,} dogs came and licked his sores. **22**Eventually
the poor man died. Then the angels took him to be with {his ancestor} Abraham. The rich man also died, and
people buried his body. **23**In the place of the dead, the rich man was suffering great pain. He looked up and saw
Abraham far away and Lazarus sitting very close to Abraham. **24**So the rich man shouted, ‘Father Abraham, I am
suffering very much in this fire! So please pity me and send Lazarus here so that he can dip his finger in water and
touch my tongue to cool it!’ **25**But Abraham replied, ‘Child, remember that while you were alive on earth you
enjoyed many good things. But Lazarus was miserable. Now he is happy here, and you are suffering. **26**Besides
that, God has placed a huge ravine between you and us. So those who want to go from here to you there are not
able to. Furthermore, no one can cross from there to where we are, either.’ **27**Then the rich man said, ‘If that is so,
Father Abraham, I ask you to send Lazarus to my family home. **28**I have five brothers {who live there}. Tell him to

warn them so that they do not also come to this place where we suffer great pain!' **29**But Abraham replied, '{No, I will not do that because} your brothers have what Moses and the prophets wrote long ago. They should obey what they wrote!' **30**But the rich man replied, 'No, Father Abraham{, that will not be enough}! But if someone from those who have died goes back to them and warns them, they will turn from their sinful behavior.' **31**Abraham said to him, 'So they would not obey what Moses and the prophets wrote. Then it would not help even if someone from among the people who have died went and warned them. They would still not believe that they should turn from their sinful behavior.'"

Chapter 17

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

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

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

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

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

22Jesus said to his disciples, "There will be a time when you will want to see me, the Son of Man, ruling powerfully. But you will not see that. **23**People will say to you, 'Look, the Messiah is over there!' or they will say, 'Look, he is here!' {When they say that,} do not follow them. **24**For when the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other{, everyone can see it}. Similarly, when I, the Son of Man, come back again, everyone will see me. **25**But before that happens, I must suffer in many ways, and people will reject me. **26**But when I, the Son of Man, come again, people will be doing things just like people were doing at the time when Noah lived. **27**At that time people ate and drank {as usual}, and they got married {as usual}, up until the day when Noah and his family entered the big boat. But then the flood came and destroyed all those who were not in the boat. **28**Similarly, when

Lot lived {in the city of Sodom}, people {there} ate and drank {as usual}. They bought things and they sold things. They planted crops and they built houses {as usual}. **29**But on the day that Lot left Sodom, fire and burning sulfur came down from the sky and destroyed all those who had stayed in the city. **30**Similarly, when I, the Son of Man, return to earth, people will be unprepared. **31**On that day, those who are outside their houses, with all the things that they own inside the houses, must not take the time to go inside and get them. Similarly, those who are out working in a field must not come back home to get anything. {They must flee quickly.} **32**Remember what happened to Lot's wife! **33**Anyone who continues in his own way of living will die. But anyone who leaves his old way of living {for my sake} will live forever. **34**I tell you this: On the night when I return, there will be two people sleeping in one bed. God will take the one who believes in me and leave the other one behind. **35**Two women will be grinding grain together. God will take one of them and leave the other one behind." **36***[1]* ["There will be two in the field; one will be taken and the other left."] **37**His disciples said to him, "Lord, where will this happen?" He replied to them, "Wherever there is a dead body, the vultures will gather to eat it."

17:36 *[1]*

Chapter 18

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

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

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

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

20{In answer to your question, certainly} you know the commandments {that God gave to Moses for us to obey}: 'Do not commit adultery. Do not murder anyone. Do not steal. Do not give a false report. Honor your father and

mother.'" [21]The man said, "I have obeyed all those commandments ever since I was young." [22]When Jesus heard him say that, he replied to him, "You still need to do one more thing. Sell all that you own. Then give the money to people who have very little to live on. The result will be that you will have spiritual riches in heaven. Then come and be my disciple!" [23]The man became very sad when he heard that, because he was extremely rich. [24]When Jesus looked at the man and said, "It is very difficult for those who are wealthy to let God rule over them. [25]In fact, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for rich people to let God rule their lives." [26]Those who heard Jesus say that replied, "Then it seems that God will not consider that anyone should have eternal life!" [27]But Jesus said, "What is impossible for people is possible for God." [28]Then Peter said, "What about us? We have left everything we had in order to become your disciples." [29]Jesus said to them, "I can assure you that those who have left their homes, their wives, their brothers, their parents, or their children in order to let God rule over them [30]will receive in this life many times as much as they left behind and, in the coming age, they will receive everlasting life."

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

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

Chapter 19

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

[11]The people were listening to everything Jesus said. He was getting close to Jerusalem{, and he knew that the people had a wrong idea}. They thought he would begin to rule as king over God's people as soon as he got to Jerusalem. So Jesus decided to tell them another story {to correct that idea}. [12]He said, "A prince was preparing to go to a distant country so that a higher king could give him the right to rule over the country where he lived. After he received it, he would come back to rule his people. [13]{Before he left,} he summoned ten of his servants. He gave each of them an equal amount of money. He said to them, 'Do business with this money until I return!' {Then he

left.} **14**But many people of his country hated him. So they sent some messengers to follow him and say {to the higher king}, ‘We do not want this man to be our king!’ **15**{But he was made king anyway. Later} he returned as the new king. Then he called in the servants to whom he had given the money. He wanted to know how much they had gained by doing business with the money he had given them. **16**The first servant came to him and said, ‘Sir, with your money I have earned ten times as much!’ **17**He said to this man, ‘You are a good servant! You have done very well! Because you have faithfully taken care of a small amount of money, I will give you ten cities to rule over.’ **18**Then the second servant came and said, ‘Sir, the money you gave me is now worth five times as much!’ **19**He also said to that servant, ‘{Well done!} I will put you over five cities.’ **20**Then another servant came. He said, ‘Sir, here is your money. I wrapped it up in a cloth and hid it to keep it safe. **21**I was afraid that you would take everything I earned. I know you are a hard man who takes things from others that do not really belong to you. You are like a farmer who harvests grain that another farmer has planted.’ **22**He said to that servant, ‘You wicked servant! I will condemn you by the words you just said. You said I am a hard man. You said I take what does not belong to me. You said I am like a farmer who harvests what another farmer has planted. **23**So you should at least have given my money to money lenders! Then when I returned I could have collected that amount plus the interest it would have earned!’ **24**Then the king said to those who were standing near, ‘Take the money from him and give it to the servant who made ten times as much!’ **25**They protested, ‘But sir, he already has a lot of money!’ **26**But the king said, ‘I tell you this: To the people who use well what they have received, I will give even more. But from the people who do not use well what they have received, I will take away even what they already have. **27**Now, as for those enemies of mine who did not want me to rule over them, bring them here and execute them while I am watching!’”

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

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

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

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

Chapter 20

1One day during that week, Jesus was teaching the people at the temple and telling them God's good message. As
he was doing that, the chief priests, the teachers of the Jewish laws, and some other elders came to him. **2**They said
to him, "Tell us, what right do you have to do these things? And who gave you this right?" **3**He replied, "I will also
ask you a question. Tell me **4**about John baptizing people: Did God command him to baptize or did humans
command him?" **5**They discussed this among themselves. They said, "If we answer, 'God commanded him,' then he
will say, 'So why did you not believe him?' **6**But if we say, 'It was only humans who told him to baptize,' the people
will stone us to death, because most of them believe that John was a prophet {whom God sent}." **7**So they replied
that they did not know who told John to baptize. **8**Then Jesus said to them, "Just as you will not tell me, I will not tell
you who sent me to do those things."

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

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

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

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

27After that, some Sadducees came to Jesus. Their group of Jews taught that no one would rise from the dead. They
also intended to ask Jesus a challenging question. **28**One of them said to him, "Teacher, Moses taught us Jews what
to do if a man dies who has a wife but no children. His brother should marry the widow so that she can have a child
by him. People will then consider that child a descendant of the man who died. **29**Well, there were seven brothers in
one family. The oldest one married a woman, but before she had any children, he died, leaving her as a widow.

30The second brother followed this law and married the widow, but the same thing happened to him. **31**Then the third brother married her, but the same thing happened again. In the end, all seven brothers, one by one, married that woman but died without having any children. **32**Afterwards, the woman died, too. **33**Therefore, if it is true that there will be a time when people who have died will become alive again, whose wife do you think that woman will be then? Keep in mind that she was married to all seven brothers!" **34**Jesus replied to them, "In this world, men marry women, and parents give daughters in marriage to men. **35**But the people whom God will consider worthy of being in heaven when he brings them back to life after they have died will not marry. **36**{They do not marry} because they cannot die anymore. Rather, they are like the angels {who live forever}. They are God's children, since God has made them alive again after they have died. **37**{Now that I have answered your question about marriage, I will show from Scripture} that God does make people alive again after they have died. Even Moses wrote about this. In the place where he describes meeting God at the burning bush, he records how the Lord called himself 'the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.' {God would not have said that if he had not made those men alive again and he were not still their God.} **38**After all, he is not the God of people who are dead. He is the God of people who are alive, because to God, everyone remains alive {even after they die}."

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

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

'God said to my Lord,

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

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

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

45Then, while all the other people were listening, Jesus said to his disciples, **46**"Make sure that you do not act like the men who teach our Jewish laws. They like to put on long robes and walk around to make people think that they are very important. They also like people to greet them respectfully in the marketplaces. They like to sit in the most important seats in the synagogues. At dinner parties they like to sit in the places for the most honored people. **47**They {also} steal all the property of widows. But to make other people think that they are righteous, they pray for a long time {in public}. God will condemn them strictly for what they have done."

Chapter 21

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

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

7Then they asked him, "Teacher, when will these things happen? And what will show that these things are about to take place?" **8**Jesus replied, "Do not let anyone mislead you. For many people will come and each will claim to be

me. Each will say about himself, ‘I am the Messiah!’ They will also say, ‘The time is almost here when God will rule as king!’ Do not believe what they are saying! **9**Also, you will hear about wars and people fighting each other. Things like that must happen before the end {of the world} comes. So {when you hear about those things,} do not be afraid.

10Various people groups will attack each other, and the people of different kingdoms will fight each other. **11**And in various places there will be great earthquakes. There will also be famines and terrible diseases. Many things will happen that will cause people to be very afraid. People will see strange things in the sky {that will show that something very important is going to happen}. **12**But before all these things {happen}, your enemies will seize you and treat you badly. They will bring you to the synagogues{, whose judges will put you on trial} and {put you in the} prisons. Your enemies will also have kings and high government authorities put you on trial because you believe in me. **13**That will be a time for you to tell them the truth about me. **14**So resolve firmly not to worry ahead of time about what you will say to defend yourselves, **15**because I will give you the right words so that you will know what to say. As a result, none of the people accusing you will be able to say that you are wrong. **16**And even your parents and brothers and sisters and {other} relatives and friends will betray you, and they will kill some of you. **17**Most people will hate you because you believe in me. **18**But your entire being will be safe {spiritually}. **19**If you go through difficult times and prove that you trust God, after you die your souls will live on in God’s presence.

20When you see armies surround {the city of} Jerusalem, then you will know that they will soon destroy that city. **21**At that time those of you who are in {other places in the province of} Judea must escape to the mountains. And those of you who are in this city must leave. Those of you who are in the nearby countryside must not come into the city. **22**{You should run away} because God will punish {the city of Jerusalem} at this time. {When he does that,} what God has said in the Scriptures about this will come true. **23**When this happens, how terrible it will be for pregnant women and for those who are nursing their babies. There will be great suffering in the land. God will be angry with these people and punish them severely. **24**Many of them will die because soldiers will kill them with their weapons. Their enemies will take others as prisoners and send them to many places around the world. The Gentiles will control {the city of} Jerusalem for as long as God allows.”

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

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

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

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

Chapter 22

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

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

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

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

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

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

31"Simon, Simon, pay attention! Satan has asked {God} to {let him} test all of you, the way someone shakes grain in a sieve{, and God has permitted him to do that}. **32**But I have prayed for you, Simon. {I have asked God} that you will not completely stop believing in me. So when you decide that you truly do believe in me, encourage the others

{to believe in me as well}." **33**Peter replied to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison. I am even willing to die with you!" **34**Jesus replied, "Peter, I want you to know that this night, before the rooster crows, you will say three times that you do not know me!"

35Then Jesus asked the disciples, "When I sent you out {to the villages, and you went} without any money, food, or sandals, was there anything you needed but could not get?" They replied, "No, there was nothing!" **36**Then Jesus said, "But, now, if anyone {among you} has some money, he should take it with him. Also, whoever has food should take it with him. And whoever does not have a sword should sell his coat and buy one!" **37**I tell you this because what a prophet wrote about me in the Scriptures must take place: 'People treated him like a criminal.' Everything the Scriptures say about me is going to happen. **38**The disciples replied, "Lord, look! We have two swords!" He answered, "We will not need more than two."

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

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

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

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

66At dawn the next morning, many of the Jewish leaders gathered together. In this group were the chief priests and the men who taught the Jewish laws. They had the soldiers bring Jesus into the Jewish council chamber. **67**There they said to him, "If you are the Messiah, tell us!" But he replied, "If I say that I am the Messiah, you will not believe

me. **68**But if I ask you whether you think I am the Messiah, you will not answer me. **69**But from now on, I, the Messiah, will be sitting next to almighty God {and ruling}!" **70**Then they all asked, "If that is so, are you {saying that you are} the Son of God?" He answered, "Yes, what you are saying is true." **71**Then they said to each other, "We ourselves have heard him say {that he is equal to God}! And so we certainly do not need any more people to testify against him {on a charge of blasphemy}!"

22:43 *[1]*
22:44 *[2]*

Chapter 23

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

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

13Pilate then gathered together the chief priests and other Jewish leaders and the crowd that was still there. **14**He said to them, "You brought this man to me, saying that he has been leading the people to revolt. But I want you to know that after examining him while you were listening, I conclude that he is not guilty of doing any of the things you said he did. **15**Also, Herod sent him back to us {without punishing him}. That means that he too {concluded that he was not guilty}. So it is clear that this man has not done anything for which he deserves to die. **16**So I will {tell my soldiers to} whip him and then set him free." **17***[1]* [{Pilate said this because} he had to set one prisoner free at every Passover celebration.] **18**But the whole crowd shouted together, "Put this man to death! Set Barabbas free for us instead!" **19**Now Barabbas was a man who had led some people in the city {of Jerusalem} to rebel against the Roman government. He was also a murderer. He was in prison because of these crimes. **20**But Pilate wanted very much to set Jesus free, so he tried to speak to the crowd again. **21**But they kept on shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" **22**Pilate then spoke to the crowd a third time. "No! He has not committed any crime! He has not done anything for which he deserves to die. So I will have my soldiers whip him, and then I will set him free." **23**But the people in the crowd kept shouting to insist that Pilate execute Jesus on a cross. Finally, because they continued to shout so loudly, they persuaded Pilate. **24**So Pilate declared that he would do what they wanted. **25**Then Pilate set free the man whom the crowd was asking him to release. That man was in prison because he had fought against the government and murdered people! Pilate then commanded the soldiers to take Jesus and do what the crowd wanted.

26Now there was a man named Simon, who was from the city of Cyrene {in Africa}. He was coming into Jerusalem from the countryside. As the soldiers were leading Jesus away, they grabbed hold of Simon. They {took from Jesus the cross that they had made him carry, and they} put it on Simon's shoulders. They told him to carry it and follow behind Jesus. **27**Now a large crowd was walking behind Jesus. In the crowd were many women who were beating

on their chests {to show their grief} and wailing {sorrowfully} for him. **28**But {instead of accepting their sympathy,} Jesus turned to these women and said, “You women of Jerusalem, do not weep for me! Instead, weep over {the terrible things that are going to happen to} you and your children! **29**For I want you to know that there will {soon} be a time when people will say, ‘How fortunate are the women who have never given birth to children or nursed babies!’ **30**Then the people in this city will say, ‘We wish that the mountains would fall on top of us and that the hills would cover us up!’ **31**Right now it is difficult for people to do bad things to others, just as it is difficult to set fire to fresh wood. But later, people will easily be able to do terrible things to others, just as it is easy to set fire to dry wood.”

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

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

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

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

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

23:17 [1]
23:34 [2]

Chapter 24

1Very early in the morning on Sunday, those women went to the burial chamber. They brought with them the spices that they had prepared {to put on the body of Jesus}. **2**{When they arrived,} they discovered that somebody had rolled away the stone {that had been closing off the entrance} to the burial chamber. **3**They went into {the burial chamber}, but the body of Jesus was not there! **4**They did not know what to think about that. Then suddenly two men stood by them wearing bright, shining clothes! **5**This made the women very frightened. They bowed down low to the ground. The two men said to them, "You should not be looking for someone who is alive in a place where they bury the bodies of dead people! **6**He is not here. No, he has come back to life! Recall that while he was still with you in Galilee, he said to you, **7**'They will have to hand me, the Son of Man, over to sinful men. Those men will kill me by nailing me to a cross. But two days later, I will become alive again.'" **8**The women recalled what Jesus had told them. **9**So they left the burial chamber and went to Jesus' 11 representatives and the other disciples of Jesus and told them what happened. **10**The women who told these things to them were Mary from Magdala village, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women who were with them. **11**But they thought this report was foolishness, so they did not believe the women. **12**However, Peter decided {to see whether the story was true}. He ran to the burial chamber. He stooped down {and looked inside}. He saw the linen cloths {in which Jesus' body had been wrapped, but Jesus was not there}. So he left the tomb, puzzling over what had happened.

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

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

some others who had gathered together with them. **34**They told those two men, “It is true that Jesus has become
alive again. He has appeared to Simon!” **35**Then those two men told the others what had happened as they were
walking along the road. They also told them how they both recognized Jesus as he broke some bread for them.

36As they were saying that, Jesus himself suddenly appeared among them. He said to them, “May God give you
peace!” **37**But {they were not peaceful.} They were startled and afraid because they thought that they were seeing a
ghost! **38**He said to them, “You should not be alarmed! And you should not doubt {that I am alive}. **39**Look at {the
wounds in my hands} and my feet! That way you can be sure that it is really I myself. Ghosts do not have bodies, as
you see that I have, and you can touch me to prove that my body is real.” **40**After he said that, he showed them {the
wounds in} his hands and his feet. **41**They were so glad that they could still hardly believe {that he was really alive}.
So he said to them, “Do you have something here that I could eat?” **42**So they gave him a piece of roasted fish.
43While they were watching, he took it and ate it.

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

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

John

Chapter 1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 2

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 3

1Now there was a man named Nicodemus. He was a member of {a strict Jewish religious group called} the Pharisees. He was a member of the highest Jewish governing council. **2**He visited Jesus at night. He said to Jesus, “Teacher, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. {We know this} because no one can do these miracles you are doing unless God is helping him.” **3**Jesus replied to Nicodemus and said, “I am telling you the truth: No one can enter where God rules without being born a second time.” **4**Then Nicodemus said to him, “How can a person be born again when he is old? No one can enter his mother’s womb and be born a second time!” **5**Jesus answered, “I am telling you the truth: no one can enter where God rules unless he is born again by water and the Spirit. **6**If a human being gives birth to a person, {that person} is a human being. But those who are born {again} by the {work of God’s} Spirit have a new spiritual nature {that God makes within them}. **7**Do not be astonished because I told you that you must be born again. **8**The Holy Spirit is like the wind that blows wherever it wants to blow. Although you can hear the sound of the wind, you do not know where the wind came from or where it is going. {Just as you do not understand these things,} so {also you do not understand} everyone who is born {again} by the {work of God’s} Spirit.” **9**Nicodemus answered him, “How is this possible?” **10**Jesus answered him, “You are an important religious teacher among the people of Israel, so you should understand what I am saying! **11**I am telling you the truth: my disciples and I say the things that we know are true, and we are telling you the things that we have witnessed. Yet you people {to whom we say these things} reject what we are saying. **12**Since you people do not trust what I say when I tell you about things that happen on this earth, you certainly will not trust what I say when I tell you about things that happen in heaven! **13**I, the Son of Man, am the only one who has

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 4

1Later, {the religious group called} the Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining more disciples than John the Baptizer and that he was baptizing more people than John was baptizing. Jesus also found out that the Pharisees had heard this. **2**(Jesus did not actually baptize anyone, but his disciples were baptizing people.) **3**{When he found out that the Pharisees were aware of him,} Jesus left the region of Judea and returned once more to the region of Galilee. **4**Now {to get to the region of Galilee} he had to go through the region of Samaria. **5**Next, they arrived at a city named Sychar in the region of Samaria. Sychar was near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph {a long time ago}. **6**(Jacob's well was in that area.) After {arriving at Sychar} Jesus was very tired because of his long journey, so he sat down {to rest} next to Jacob's well. It was about noon. **7**A Samaritan woman came out {to

the well} {to lower a bucket on a rope} to pull up some water. Jesus said to her, “Please give me some water to drink.” **8**{He said this} because his disciples had left {him by himself} and had gone into the city in order to buy food. **9**And the Samaritan woman said to Jesus, “I am surprised that you, a Jew, are asking me, a woman from Samaria, for a drink.” ({She said this} because Jews usually would not have anything to do with Samaritans.) **10**Jesus replied to her, “If you had known the gift that God wants to give you, and if you had known who I am who is requesting a drink from you, you would have asked me for a drink, and I would have given you living water.” **11**The woman replied, “Sir, you do not have a bucket {with which to draw the water up out of the well,} and this well is deep. {Since you can’t get the water out of this well,} where did you get this living water from? **12**You are surely not greater than our father Jacob. He {dug this well} and gave it to us. He, his sons, and his livestock drank water from it as well.” **13**Jesus replied to her, “Everyone who drinks water from this well will become thirsty again. **14**But anyone who drinks the water that I will give him will never become thirsty again. Rather, the water that I will give him will become a spring of water inside him {that fills him up} and causes him to live forever {in heaven}.” **15**The woman said to Jesus, “Sir, please give me some of this water in order that I may never become thirsty again or have to come to this well to draw water again.”

16Jesus told her, “Go get your husband and bring him here.” **17**The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus told her, “You are right in saying that you have no husband, **18**because you have had not one, but five, husbands, and the man you are currently {living with} is not your husband. What you have said {about not having a husband} is true.”

19The woman said to Jesus, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. **20**Our ancestors worshiped God right here on this mountain, but you Jews say that we must worship God at {your temple} in Jerusalem.” **21**Jesus told her, “Madam, believe me when I say that a time is coming when neither here on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. **22**You people {here in Samaria} worship the God whom you do not know. We Jews worship the God whom we know. {This is true} because the way to be saved {from your sins} comes from among the Jews. **23**Nevertheless, the time is coming and has now arrived when those who truly worship God will worship the Father spiritually and truthfully. {This is} because the Father indeed searches for such people to worship him. **24**God is a spiritual being, and those who worship him must worship him spiritually and truthfully.” **25**The woman said to Jesus, “I know that the Messiah will come. (He is the one called ‘Christ’ in Greek.) When he comes, he will tell us everything {that we need to know}.” **26**Jesus told her, “I, who am speaking to you now, I am the Messiah!”

27Just at that moment, his disciples came back from the city. They were astonished because Jesus was talking {alone} with a woman {whom he did not know}. However, no one dared to ask him, “What do you want from her?” or “Why are you talking with her at all?”

28At that time the woman left her water jar there and returned to the city. She said to the men of the city, **29**“Come and meet this man who told me so many things that I have done! He could not be the Messiah, could he?” **30**Those men left the city and came to Jesus.

31{While the woman was gone,} Jesus’ disciples, {who had just returned with the food,} pleaded with him to eat. They said, “Teacher, please eat something!” **32**Jesus told them, “I have sustenance that you know nothing about!” **33**So they were saying to one another, “Surely no one else could have brought him something to eat, could they?” **34**Jesus told them, “This is what sustains me: It is to do what my Father—who sent me—wants and to complete my Father’s work. **35**{At this time of the year} you usually say, ‘There are four months left, and then we will harvest the crops.’ Listen to what I’m telling you. Look and see that these people are like fields that are now ready for harvest! **36**The one who harvests these crops receives payment and collects fruit, which is people receiving life forever {in heaven}. The result is that those who sow the seed and those who reap the harvest will be glad together. **37**What I’m going to say is true: One person sows the seeds, and another person harvests the crops. **38**I sent you disciples of mine to gather the harvest from a crop that you did not plant. Others have worked very hard {to plant the crop}, but you are now joining them in their work.”

39 Now many Samaritans who lived in the city of Sychar trusted in Jesus because of what the woman had told them.
She said, “He told me so many things that I have done.” 40 When the Samaritans came to Jesus, they asked him to
remain with them. So he stayed there with them for two more days. 41 Many more of them trusted in Jesus because
of what he proclaimed to them. 42 The townspeople told the woman, “We believe in Jesus now, but not just because
of what you told us about him. {We believe} because we have heard his message for ourselves. Now we know that
this man truly is the one who saves the believers in the world {from their sins}.”

43 After he stayed for two days {with the Samaritans}, Jesus left the city of Sychar and entered the region of Galilee.
44 (Jesus wanted to go to Galilee because he himself confirmed that a prophet does not receive honor in the place
where he grew up {and he did not want publicity}.) 45 Since this is true, when he arrived in the region of Galilee
many of the people there merely welcomed him because they had seen all the amazing things he had done in
Jerusalem during the recent Passover celebration, which they also had gone to. 46 Next, Jesus went back again to
the town of Cana in the region of Galilee. {That was} where he had turned water into wine. There was an official of
the king who lived nearby in the city of Capernaum and had a son who was very sick. 47 When that official heard
that Jesus had come back to Galilee from Judea, he went to Jesus in Cana and asked him to come down to
Capernaum and heal his son, because his son would die soon. 48 Jesus then told him, “You people will only trust in
me {as the Messiah} if you see {me perform} wonderful miracles!” 49 The official of the king said to him, “Sir, please
come down to my home in Capernaum before my son dies!” 50 Jesus told him, “Go home. Your son will live.” The
man trusted what Jesus told him, and he started to go back home. 51 As the official was traveling down to his home
in the city of Capernaum, his servants met him {along the road}. They told him, “Your child is going to live.” 52 He
asked his servants, “At what time did my son start getting better?” They answered him, “At 1:00 PM yesterday his
fever went away.” 53 And the boy’s father recognized that his son had recovered at the exact time that Jesus had
told him that his son would live. So this same man, along with everyone who lived in his house, trusted in Jesus.

54 That was the second great miracle that Jesus did. {He did it during the time that} he came to the region of Galilee
after leaving the region of Judea.

Chapter 5

1 After those things happened, the time came for another Jewish festival, and Jesus walked up to the city of
Jerusalem {to celebrate the festival}. 2 {There is a place} called the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem, {which is one of the
gates going into the city}. There is a pool beside that gate which people called Bethesda in the language used by
the Jews. Next to the pool are five porches with roofs. 3 Many people were lying on these porches. They were people
who were ill, unable to see, unable to walk, or unable to move. 4[1] [{They were lying there} because an angel from
the Lord would occasionally come down and aggravate the water. Whoever was the first person to step into the
water after the angel aggravated it was healed from whatever illness or infirmity that was afflicting him.] 5 There
was a man lying near this pool called Bethesda who had been sick for 38 years. 6 Jesus saw this man lying near the
pool, and he knew that he had been lying there for a long time. He asked the man, “Do you want your health to get
better?” 7 The ill man answered him, “Sir, I don’t have anyone who can put me into the pool when an angel stirs the
water. By the time I can put myself into the pool, someone else has already gone down into the pool {and been
healed} before me, {so that I cannot be healed}.” 8 Jesus told him, “Stand up! Pick up the mat {that you have been
lying on} and walk!” 9 Then Jesus healed the man at once, and the man picked up the mat {that he had been lying
on} and walked.

(Now this happened on {the Jewish day for rest known as} the Sabbath. 10 Because {it was the Jewish day for rest},
the Jewish leaders said to the man whom Jesus had healed, “Today is a day for rest. You are not allowed to carry
your mat {on this day, because it is work}.” 11 The man whom Jesus had healed answered them, “The man who
healed me told me to pick up the mat {that I had been lying on} and walk.”’ 12 The Jewish leaders asked him, “Who
told you to pick up your mat and walk?” 13 However, the man whom Jesus had healed did not know who had healed
him, because Jesus had left the man without being noticed, since that area was crowded.

14Later, Jesus found the man whom he had healed in the temple and told him, “Look, you are well now! Do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse {than your previous illness} might happen to you.” **15**That man went away and told the Jewish leaders that the man who had healed him was Jesus. **16**So the Jewish leaders started persecuting Jesus because he was miraculously healing people on the Jewish day for rest. **17**Jesus gave this answer to them, “God, my Father, is working today, so I am also working.” **18**As a consequence {of him saying this}, the Jewish leaders were trying to kill Jesus even more {than they had tried before}. {They wanted to kill him} because he was not only disobeying their rules for the day for rest but also because he was claiming that he was equal with God by saying that God was his own Father.

19Because of {these accusations} Jesus replied to the Jewish leaders, “I am telling you {people} the truth: I, the Son, can do nothing on my own authority. I can only do what I perceive that God, the Father, is doing. Whatever the Father does, I, the Son, also do. **20**{This is true} because the Father loves me, the Son, and makes known to me everything that he is doing. The Father will also make known to me miraculous deeds that will be even greater than the miracles {that I have already done} in order that you might be astonished by them. **21**{This will happen} because I, the Son, give eternal life to anyone I want in the same way that the Father resurrects those who have died and gives them life again. **22**{This is true} because the Father does not judge anyone. Rather, he has given all authority to judge people to me, the Son. **23**{The Father did this} in order that everyone would honor me, the Son, in the same way that they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor me cannot honor my Father, who sent me. **24**I am telling you people the truth: Anyone who accepts and obeys my teachings and trusts God who sent me lives forever {with me in heaven}, and God does not judge him as guilty. Instead, that person has gone from being spiritually dead to being spiritually alive.

25I am telling you people the truth: A time is coming and, in fact, is here already when those who have died will hear my voice, the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear me will live. **26**{This is true} because as the Father is able to make people alive, in the same way he has also given me, the Son, the ability to make people alive. **27**The Father has authorized me to judge all mankind, because I am the Son of Man. **28**Do not be surprised {that the Father has done} this, because there will be a time when everyone who has died will hear my voice. **29**Then they will come out of their graves. God will raise up those who have done good to give them eternal life. But God will raise up those who have done evil to condemn and punish them forever. **30**I can do nothing on my own. I judge according to what I hear {from the Father}, and I judge in a just manner. {I judge justly} because I do not try to do what I want. Rather, I do what my Father, who has sent me, wants.

31If I alone were the only one to be a witness about myself, {according to the law of Moses} my witness would not be trustworthy. **32**Nevertheless, there is someone else who testifies about me, and I know that what he testifies about me is trustworthy. **33**You Jewish leaders sent messengers to John the Baptizer, and he told you the truth about me. **34**However, I do not need anyone to be a witness for me. Nevertheless, I am saying this about John the Baptizer in order that God might save you. **35**John the Baptizer {proclaimed God’s truth to you} like a burning and shining lamp. You were willing to rejoice for a while in the light {that was the truth that he proclaimed}. **36**However, the witness that I give about myself is even greater than the witness John gave about me. {This is} because this witness is the miraculous works that God the Father has allowed me to do. These very works that I am doing are proof that the Father has sent me. **37**Furthermore, my Father who sent me is the very one who has given testimony about me. None of you have ever heard him speak or seen what he looks like. **38**You also do not obey the Father’s teachings. {I know this is true} because you do not trust me, the very person he has sent! **39**You carefully study the Scriptures because you believe that by studying them you will be able to live forever {in heaven}. It is those very Scriptures that declare who I am. **40**Yet still you refuse to be my disciples in order that you might live {forever in heaven}.

41I do not accept honor from anyone. **42**However, I know that you do not love God at all. **43**I have come with my Father’s authority, but still you do not accept me. If someone else were to come with his own authority, you would accept him. **44**You cannot possibly trust in me when you are honoring each other instead of desiring the one and only God to honor you!

45Do not think that I am the one who will accuse you before my Father. Moses, the very person you have hoped
would defend you, is actually the person who will accuse you. **46**{He will accuse you} because if you had trusted
Moses, but you do not, then you would trust me, because Moses explained about me {in the law}. **47**Since you do
not even trust what Moses wrote, you cannot possibly trust what I have said to you!"

5:4 *[1]*

Chapter 6

1After those things happened, Jesus crossed over to the opposite side of the Sea of Galilee, which some people also
call the Sea of Tiberias. **2**A large crowd followed him because they had seen the miraculous signs he was
performing, that is, healing people who were very ill. **3**Jesus walked up on a steep hillside and sat down there with
his disciples. **4**(Now at that time the Jewish Passover celebration was about to take place.) **5**Jesus then looked up
and saw a very large crowd of people walking toward him. He asked Philip, "Where will we buy bread in order to
feed all these people?" **6**(He asked Philip this question in order to test his faith, because Jesus already knew what he
was going to do about the problem.) **7**Philip replied to him, "If we had the money that a man can earn in 200 days
of work, it would not be enough money to buy bread to give each person in this crowd even a little piece to eat."
8Another disciple of his, Simon Peter's brother Andrew, told Jesus, **9**"There is a boy here who has five little loaves of
barley bread and two small fish. Yet, these few loves and fish are certainly not enough to feed all these people!"
10Jesus told his disciples to make the people sit down. Thus about 5,000 men sat down. (There was a lot of grass in
that place {for them to sit down on}.) **11**Jesus then took the little loaves of barley bread, and he thanked God for the
food. {Then} he {and his disciples} gave the loaves to the people who were sitting {on the grass} in order to eat. He
did the same with the two fish. The people ate all the fish and bread that they wanted to eat. **12**When everyone had
eaten until they were full, Jesus told his disciples to collect all the leftover, uneaten pieces of barley bread in order
that none of it would be wasted. **13**Thus his disciples collected the pieces, and they filled 12 large baskets with the
broken pieces that the people had left over from the five little loaves of barley bread.

14Because {of this}, when the people saw this miraculous sign that Jesus had performed {in front of them}, they
said, "Surely he is the Prophet whom {God promised} to send into the world!" **15**When Jesus knew that the people
were planning to grab him in order to force him to be their king, he left them again and went up the hillside to be
completely alone.

16When it was evening, Jesus' disciples walked down the hillside to the Sea of Galilee. **17**{They} got into a boat and
started to sail across the sea to the town of Capernaum. (It had already become dark, and Jesus had still not joined
them.) **18**Because the wind was blowing strongly, it was causing the sea to be very turbulent. **19**After Jesus' disciples
had rowed the boat around four-and-a-half or five-and-a-half kilometers out into the sea, they saw Jesus walking on
the water and approaching the boat. They were terrified! **20**Jesus told them, "It is I, Jesus! Stop being afraid!" **21**They
were very glad to take him into the boat. As soon as he was with them in the boat, their boat arrived at the place
where they were going.

22The day after Jesus had fed the crowd, the crowd of people that had stayed on the other side of the sea realized
that there had been only one boat there {the day before}. {They also knew} that Jesus had not gone in the boat
with his disciples. **23**(People came from the city of Tiberias in other boats. {They put their boats} near the place
where the crowd had eaten the bread after the Lord Jesus had thanked God for it.) **24**So when the crowd realized
that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into those boats and sailed to the city of Capernaum to look
for Jesus.

25The crowd found Jesus in Capernaum on the side of the Sea of Galilee that is opposite {from where he had fed
them}. They asked him, "Teacher, {we know you didn't come in a boat,} so when did you arrive here at Capernaum?"
26Jesus replied, "I am telling you the truth: You are not looking for me because you saw the miraculous signs that I
performed. Rather, {you are looking for me} only because you ate until you were full of the loaves of bread that I
gave you. **27**Stop working for food that will soon spoil! Instead, work for the food that will bring you life forever {in

heaven}! {That food} is the bread that I, the Son of Man, will give you. {I alone can give it to you} because God my Father approves of me."

28Then the crowd asked Jesus, "What works should we do in order to please God?" **29**Jesus answered them, "The work that God wants you to do is this: Trust in me, the one whom he has sent." **30**The crowd asked him, "Then what miracle will you do in order for us to see it and trust in you? What will you do for us? **31**Our ancestors ate manna {when they wandered} in the wilderness {with Moses}, just as the prophets wrote: 'God gave them bread out of heaven to eat.'"

32Jesus answered them, "I am telling you the truth: It was not Moses who gave your ancestors that bread from heaven. No, it was my Father, who is now giving you the true bread out of heaven. **33**{This is true} because the true bread from God has come down from heaven and gives eternal life to the people in the world."

34{The crowd did not understand what he meant}, so they said to Jesus, "Sir, please give this bread to us all the time." **35**Jesus told the crowd, "{Like food sustains physical life}, I am the bread that gives eternal life. {Unlike with food or drink}, anyone who trusts in me will surely be satisfied forever. **36**Nevertheless, I have already told you that even though you see me, you still do not trust me. **37**All the people my Father gives to me will come {and be my disciples}, and I will surely never drive away any of them. **38**{I will never do that} because I have not come down from heaven in order to do what I want. Rather, {I have come down} in order to do what my Father, who sent me, wants me to do. **39**This is what my Father, who sent me, wants: {He wants me} to keep all of those whom he has given to me. {He also wants} me to make these ones alive again on the last day {when I judge everyone}. **40**{This is true} because this is also what my Father wants: {He wants} everyone who recognizes who I, the Son, am, and trusts in me to live forever {with me in heaven}. I will make these ones alive again on the last day {when I judge everyone}."

41The Jewish leaders then started to grumble about Jesus, because he had said that he was the true bread that had come down out of heaven. **42**They said, "This is just Jesus, Joseph's son! We know who his parents are. He cannot possibly have come down out of heaven as he claims!" **43**Jesus answered them, "Stop grumbling among yourselves {about what I just said}. **44**Only those whom my Father, who sent me, causes to come {and be my disciples} are able to do so. I myself will make those people {who come to me} alive again on the last day {when I judge everyone}. **45**The prophets wrote that God will teach everyone. Everyone who listens to and learns from my Father will come {and be my disciples}. **46**No one has seen God my Father other than me. I am the one who came from God. I alone have seen him. **47**I am telling you the truth: Whoever trusts in me will live forever {with me in heaven}. **48**I am the true bread that gives eternal life. **49**Your ancestors ate manna {when they wandered} in the wilderness {with Moses}, but they still died. **50**{But} this bread that I am talking about came down out of heaven in order that someone would eat it and that person's spirit would never die. **51**I truly am this bread that gives eternal life and came down out of heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever {with me in heaven}. My body is also this bread. I will give up my body for the sake of the eternal life of everyone in the world."

52The Jewish leaders then started arguing with each other. They said, "This man surely cannot give his body to us in order for us to eat it!" **53**So Jesus told them: "I am telling you the truth: You must eat the flesh of me, the Son of Man, and drink my blood. {If you do not do these things, then} you will never have eternal life. **54**Anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood will live forever {with me in heaven}. I will also make that person alive again on the last day {when I judge everyone}. **55**{This is so} because my flesh is true spiritual food, and my blood is true {spiritual} drink. **56**Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood will be united with me, and I will be united with them. **57**My Father makes everyone alive. He has sent me here, and I can make people alive because he has enabled me to do so. In the same way, those who feed on me will live forever because of what I will do for them. **58**I am this bread that has come down out of heaven. {This bread is} not like {the bread that} the Israelite ancestors ate {in the wilderness} but still eventually died. Anyone who eats me—this bread—will live forever {with me in heaven}." **59**Jesus said these statements {to the Jewish leaders} in a synagogue while he was teaching in the city of Capernaum.

60After they heard {what he had said}, many of Jesus' disciples said, "What he is teaching is difficult to accept.
Indeed, no one can accept it!" **61**{Although no one told} him, Jesus knew that his disciples were grumbling about
what he had said. {So} he asked them, "Did my teaching offend you? **62**{If this teaching has offended you,} then
{would you also be offended} if you saw me, the Son of Man, ascending to heaven where I was formerly? **63**The
Holy Spirit is the only one who can give anyone eternal life. Human nature is useless in this matter. What I have
taught you comes from the Holy Spirit and gives eternal life. **64**Nevertheless, some of you do not believe what I
have said." (Jesus said this because he knew since he began his work who would not believe him and who would
eventually betray him.)

65Then Jesus said, "Because {some of you do not believe me}, I told you earlier that only those to whom God the
Father has given the ability to come {and be my disciple} will be able to do so."

66After Jesus said these things, a lot of his disciples went back {to doing what they had been doing before they met
him} and stopped being his disciples. **67**Because {so many left him}, Jesus asked his 12 representatives, "Surely you
do not also want to leave me, do you?" **68**Simon Peter replied, "Lord, {if we were to leave you}, there is no one else
we could go to! Only you teach the message {that allows us} to live forever {in heaven}! **69**We trust in you, and we
know for certain that you are the Holy One who has come from God!" **70**Jesus answered them, "I surely chose all
you 12 men to represent me, but one of you is under the control of Satan!" **71**({When Jesus said this} he was talking
about Judas, Simon Iscariot's son, because he was the one among Jesus' 12 representatives who would later betray
Jesus.)

Chapter 7

1After those things happened, Jesus walked around in the region of Galilee because he did not want to walk around
in the region of Judea. {He avoided Judea} because the Jewish leaders there were trying to find a way to kill him.
2(Now at that time the Jewish Shelters celebration was about to take place.) **3**Jesus' brothers told him, "Leave here
and go to the region of Judea in order that your disciples can also observe you doing miraculous works. **4**{Do your
miraculous works in Judea} because no one who wants to be famous does anything secretly. Since you are doing all
these miracles, reveal who you {claim to be} to everyone {by doing miraculous works}!" **5**{Jesus' brothers said this}
because not even they believed he was the Messiah. **6**Because {they did not believe in him,} Jesus told them, "This
is not the right time for me {to go to Jerusalem}, but you can go there whenever you want. **7**No one in the world
can hate you. However, everyone hates me because I declare that they do evil deeds. **8**You go {to Jerusalem} for the
celebration. I am not going to the celebration yet, because now is not the right time for me to go." **9**After saying
that to his brothers, Jesus stayed a little longer in the region of Galilee.

10However, a few days after his brothers left for the festival, he also went, but he did so secretly. **11**Because the
Jewish leaders {expected Jesus to be} at the celebration, they tried to find him. They asked people, "Where is that
man?" **12**The crowds were quietly speaking a lot about Jesus. Some people said, "He is a good man!" But others
said, "No! He deceives the crowd!" **13**Nevertheless, the people were afraid of the Jewish leaders, so they didn't speak
about Jesus in public.

14About halfway through the Shelters celebration, Jesus entered the temple {courtyard} and started teaching the
people there. **15**The Jewish leaders were shocked {at his teaching}. They said, "This man has not received religious
training. He cannot possibly know the scriptures so well!" **16**Jesus replied to them, "What I teach does not come
from myself. On the contrary, it comes from God, who sent me. **17**If anyone wants to do what God wants, then that
person will know that what I am teaching has come from God and not only by my own authority. **18**Anyone who
speaks on his own authority only wants to glorify himself. However, anyone who wants to glorify the person who
sent him speaks the truth and acts righteously. **19**Moses did indeed give you laws {from God}. None of you
completely obeys those laws. {Since that is true,} why are you trying to kill me {for supposedly disobeying those
same laws that you don't obey}?"

20Some people in the crowd replied, “A demon is controlling you! No one is trying to kill you!” **21**Jesus replied to the crowd, “{Because} I did one miraculous healing on the day for rest, all of you are shocked. **22**Because {some works like healing would occur on the day for rest}, Moses gave you a law about circumcision. {That law states that you must circumcise your sons exactly seven days after they are born.} ({Circumcision} did not actually begin with Moses, but {this rite} began with your forefathers, {Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob}.) {Because of that law,} sometimes you must work on the day for rest by circumcising your male babies. **23**Since you sometimes circumcise someone on the day for rest in order to avoid disobeying the law of Moses, you shouldn’t be angry with me for {doing a good work like} healing someone on that day! **24**Stop judging me according to what you have seen! Rather, judge me according to what God says is right.”

25Some of the people in the crowd who dwelled in Jerusalem then said, “This is the man that our leaders are trying to kill! **26**Look! He is saying these things publicly, but our leaders are not saying anything to oppose him. Can it be that our leaders really know that he is the Messiah? **27**But {this man cannot be the Messiah!} We know where this man came from, but when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from.”

28Jesus then spoke loudly while he was teaching in the temple {courtyard}. He said, “Yes, you know me, and you know where I have come from. But I have not come here on my own authority. Rather, the one who sent me is the real God, and you do not know him. **29**I know him because I have come from him. He is the one who sent me.”

30Because {Jesus said these things}, the Jewish leaders wanted to arrest him, but no one could seize him, because it was not yet the right time for him {to die}. **31**In contrast {to the Jewish leaders}, many in the crowd of people trusted in Jesus. They kept saying, “When the Messiah comes, he surely will not be able to do more miraculous signs than this man!” **32**Some of the Pharisees overheard them quietly speaking these things about Jesus. Then they and the ruling priests sent temple guards to arrest him.

33Because {they did this}, Jesus said, “I will only be with you for a little while longer. Soon I will go back to God, who sent me. **34**You will search for me, but you will not find me. You will not be able to come to the place where I will be.” **35**So the Jewish leaders said to each other, “Where can this man go where we cannot find him? Will he actually go to those Jews who are spread throughout the world outside of Israel? Will he even teach the people there who aren’t Jews? **36**What did he mean when he said that we will search for him, but we will not find him, and we will not be able to come to the place where he will be?”

37Now on the final and most important day of the {Shelters} celebration, Jesus stood up {in the temple courtyard} and spoke loudly. He said, “Anyone who is thirsty should come to me and drink {what I will give them}! **38**This is what the prophets wrote in the scripture about anyone who trusts in me: ‘Water that gives eternal life will abundantly flow from that person’s innermost being.’” **39**(Now Jesus said this about the Holy Spirit, whom God was going to give to those who trusted in Jesus. {He said this} because {at that time God had not yet sent} the Holy Spirit {to dwell within those who trusted in him}, because Jesus had not yet received honor {by his death, resurrection, and return to heaven}.)

40After some people among the crowd heard what Jesus had said, they said, “He is truly the Prophet {whom God had said would come}!” **41**Some other people in the crowd said, “He is the Messiah!” However, others {who mistakenly thought that Jesus was born in Galilee,} said, “But the Messiah cannot possibly come from the region of Galilee. **42**The prophets wrote in the scriptures that the Messiah must come from the descendants of King David and {that he must come} from the village of Bethlehem, where David came from!” **43**Thus the people in the crowd divided {into opposing groups} on account of Jesus. **44**(Some of the people in the crowd wanted to arrest him. However, no one seized him.)

45The temple guards then returned to the ruling priests and Pharisees, who asked them, “Why did you not arrest him and bring him here?” **46**The temple guards replied, “No one has ever spoken like this man has!” **47**Because {the guards said that,} the Pharisees replied by asking, “Can it be that he has deceived you as well? **48**Surely, none of the members of our highest governing council or us Pharisees have trusted in him! **49**However, this crowd of people does not know God’s laws, and God has cursed them!”

50Then Nicodemus spoke. (He was the man who had come to Jesus {at night to speak with him} in the past. {He had done this} even though he was one of the Pharisees, {which was a group that usually opposed Jesus}.) He told the Jewish religious leaders, **51**"Our Jewish laws surely do not allow us to condemn someone without first listening to him and learning about what he has done." **52**They replied to him insultingly, "Surely, you are not from the region of Galilee as well! Are you? Read through the scriptures carefully! {If you do that,} you will see that no prophet comes from Galilee."

53*[1]* [Then they all left and went to their own homes.

7:53 *[1]*

Chapter 8

1*[1]* Jesus went to the Mount of Olives {and stayed near there that night}. **2**At dawn the next morning, Jesus returned to the temple {courtyard} and many people came to him. **3**Some of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought a woman to him. They had apprehended her while she was committing adultery. They made her stand up in the midst of this group. **4**The priests wanted to test Jesus in order to be able to accuse him {of breaking the law of Moses before the highest Jewish governing council}. So they said to him, "Teacher, we apprehended this woman while she was committing adultery, the very act itself! **5**Now Moses commanded us in the law that we must kill such women with stones. Nevertheless, what do you say we should do?" **6**However, Jesus bent down and wrote something on the ground with his finger. **7**While they continued to question him, he got up and told them, "Let the one among you who has never sinned throw the first stone at her {and lead the rest to kill her}!" **8**Then Jesus stooped down again and wrote something on the ground with his finger. **9**{After he did this,} those Jewish leaders {who were questioning him} started walking away, one by one. The older ones left first and then the younger ones. Then only Jesus was there with the woman in the midst of the people. **10**Jesus stood up and asked her, "Where are the men {who were accusing you}? Has no one condemned you {to be punished}?" **11**The woman replied, "There is no one, sir." Then Jesus said, "I do not condemn you {to be punished} either. Leave, and from now on do not sin like this anymore!"]

12Jesus spoke to the people again. He said, "I am the one who gives God's good and true light to the people in the world. Anyone who becomes my disciple will never walk in {sinful} darkness {again}. Rather, that person will have God's good and true light that gives eternal life." **13**The Pharisees then told him, "You are the only witness for yourself! {Since the law of Moses requires at least two witnesses,} what you say cannot be true!" **14**Jesus replied, "Even if I were the only witness for myself, what I say is still true because I know where I came from and {I know} where I am going. Nevertheless, you do not know where I came from and {you do not know} where I am going. **15**You judge people according to human standards. {However,} I have not come to judge anyone {in that manner}. **16**Even when I do judge people, I will judge them according to the true standard, because I do not judge people on my own. Rather, I and my Father who sent me, {will judge people together}. **17**Moses even wrote in your law that when at least two witnesses say the same thing, then what they say is true. **18**I am my own witness, but my Father who sent me is also a witness for me. {Therefore, what I say is true}."

19Because {Jesus said his father was a witness for him,} the Pharisees asked him, "Where is your father?" Jesus replied, "You do not know me, and you do not know my Father. If you knew me, you would also know my Father, {but you do not}." **20**He said these things about himself while he was teaching in the temple {courtyard}. {He said them} at the place {in the temple courtyard} where people brought money offerings. Nobody apprehended him, because it was not yet the right time for him to die.

21Jesus then told the people again, "I am going away, and you will search for me, but since you sinfully reject me, you will die without God forgiving you. You will not be able to come to the place where I am going." **22**The Jewish leaders then said {among themselves}, "Perhaps he plans to kill himself, and that is {what he means} when he says that we will not be able to come to the place where he is going." **23**Jesus told them, "You are from this earth below, but I am from heaven above. You belong to this sinful world. I do not belong to this world. **24**Because of this I told

you that you will die without God forgiving you for all the sins that you have committed. This will certainly happen unless you trust that I am {God, as I say I am}."

25Because {he said that}, they asked him, "Who are you?" Jesus replied, "That is what I have been telling you ever since the beginning! **26**I could say many things about you and judge you, {but I won't do those things at this time}. Rather, I will tell the people in the world only what I have heard from the one who sent me. He always says the truth."

27(They did not understand that Jesus was telling them about his Father {in heaven}.) **28**So Jesus told them, "When you have lifted me up to kill me, the Son of Man, you will know that I am {God}, and {you will know} that I do not do anything on my own authority. Rather, I only say what my Father has taught me to say. **29**My Father, who sent me, is always with me. He has never abandoned me, because I always do only the things that delight him." **30**While Jesus was saying these things, many more people believed that he was the Messiah.

31Jesus then told the Jews who now believed that he was the Messiah, "If you obey what I teach you, then you are my genuine disciples. **32**{Furthermore,} you will know God's truth, and {believing that} truth will free you {from what has enslaved you}." **33**They answered him, "We are the descendants of Abraham. We have never been anyone's slaves! Why do you say that we need to be free?" **34**Jesus replied, "I am telling you the truth: Anyone who sins {is controlled by his sinful desires like} a slave {is controlled by his master}. **35**Slaves do not remain as {members of their master's} family forever, {but may be freed or sold}. {However,} a son is a member of the family forever. **36**So if the Son frees you {from being slaves to sin}, you will absolutely be able to refrain {from sinning}. **37**I know that you are Abraham's physical descendants. However, you are trying to kill me because you refuse to trust what I say. **38**I am telling you about the things that my Father has shown me. Therefore, {I say that} you do what your father has told you to do."

39They replied to him, "Abraham is our ancestor." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's descendants, you would be doing the same things he did. **40**I have been telling you the true things that God told me, but you are trying to kill me. Abraham did not do something like that. **41**You are doing the same things that your real father did." They told him, "We are not illegitimate children, {like you are}! We have only one Father, and that is God." **42**Jesus told them, "If God were your Father, which he is not, you would love me because I came from him and have come to this world. {This is true} because I did not come on my own authority. Rather, I came because God sent me. **43**Do you know why you do not understand what I say? It is because you do not accept {and obey} what I have told you! **44**You belong to your father, the devil, and you desire to do what he desires. He has been murdering people since the time people first {sinned}. He has rejected what is true, because he never speaks those true things. Whenever he lies, he is doing what is natural for him to do, because he is a liar. He is even the origin of lying. **45**Yet you do not believe me, because I tell you what is true! **46**{Since I have never sinned,} none of you can prove that I have. Since I tell you what is true, there is no good reason for you to not believe what I say! **47**Those who belong to God accept {and obey} what he has said. Since {this is true,} you do not accept {and obey} what God has said, because you do not belong to God."

48The Jews opposing Jesus replied to him, "We are certainly correct when we say that you are one of the Samaritans, {whom we hate,} and that a demon is controlling you!" **49**Jesus replied, "A demon is not controlling me! On the contrary, I honor my Father {in heaven}, and you dishonor me! **50**I do not desire to persuade people to praise me. There is someone else who desires to do that and judges {whether you or I am telling the truth}. **51**I am telling you the truth: Anyone who obeys my teaching will surely never die!"

52The Jews opposing Jesus said to him, "Now we are sure that a demon is controlling you! Abraham and the prophets died long ago! Yet you say that anyone who obeys your teaching will surely never die! **53**You are surely not greater than our ancestor Abraham! He died and all the prophets also died. {So} who do you think you are?" **54**Jesus replied, "If I persuade people to praise me, that praise would be worthless. My Father is the one who praises me. He is the one whom you say is your God. **55**Although you do not know God, I do know him. If I said that I did not know him, I would be a liar like each of you. In contrast to you, I know him, and I always obey what he says. **56**Your

ancestor Abraham was overjoyed {to think} that he could see me come to the world. {God allowed him} to see me come, and he was happy."

57Because {Jesus said this}, the Jews opposing him told him, "{Abraham died a long time ago, and} you are not even fifty years old! How can you have seen Abraham?" **58**Jesus told them, "I am telling you the truth: I was {God} before Abraham was born!" **59**Because {he was claiming to be God,} the Jews opposing Jesus picked up rocks to throw at him {to kill him}. But Jesus hid {in the crowd} and left the temple {courtyard}.

8:1 [1]

Chapter 9

1While Jesus was walking along the path, he saw a man who had been blind since the day he was born. **2**His disciples asked him, "Teacher, whose sin caused this man to be blind when he was born? Did this man or his parents sin?" **3**Jesus replied, "It was neither the sin of this man nor the sin of his parents {that caused him to be blind when he was born}. Rather, {he was blind when he was born} so that I might show people the miraculous works God will do in him. **4**While I am still with you, we must do the miraculous works that my Father who sent me wants us to do. Just like day is followed by night, when people cannot work, a time will come when it is too late for us to do what God wants us to do. **5**While I am still living in this world, I am the one who gives God's good and true light to the people in the world."

6When he said this, he spat on the dirt and made mud by mixing his saliva {with the dirt}. Then he spread that mud on the blind man's eyes. **7**Then Jesus said to the blind man, "Go and wash {the mud off} in the pool of Siloam!" ('Siloam' means 'sent' {in Aramaic}). So the man left and washed {the mud off in that pool}. Then he went {home} when he was able to see. **8**The man's neighbors and others who had seen him in the past and knew that he was a beggar said, "This is surely the man who used to sit here and beg!" **9**Some people said, "Yes, he is that man." Other people said, "No, but he just looks like that man." However, the man himself said, "Yes, I am the man who was blind!" **10**So they asked him, "How is it that you can see now?" **11**He replied, "The man people call Jesus made mud {with dirt and his saliva} and spread it on my eyes. Then he told me to go to the pool of Siloam and wash {the mud off}. So I went there and washed {the mud off}. Then I was able to see {for the first time}." **12**They asked him, "Where is that man?" He replied, "I do not know where he is."

13{Some of the people there} took the man who used to be blind to some of the Pharisees. **14**(Now the day when Jesus made the mud {with his saliva} and enabled the man to see was the Jewish day for rest.) **15**Then the Pharisees questioned the man for a second time. {This time} as well, they asked him about how he was now able to see. He told them, "The man placed mud on my eyes, and I washed {it off}, and now I {am able to} see {for the first time}." **16**Some of the Pharisees then said, "{We know that} this man has not come from God, because he does not follow the rules for the Jewish day for rest." Some other Pharisees said, "Surely a sinful man could not do the kinds of miraculous signs that this man does!" So the Pharisees disagreed with each other {regarding who Jesus was}. **17**So the Pharisees asked the blind man again, "What do you say about this man, since you say that he is the one who enabled you to see?" The man said, "He must be a prophet."

18Because {the man believed that Jesus was a prophet}, the Jewish leaders did not believe that the man had been blind and then became able to see until after they summoned the man's parents {in order to question them}. **19**They asked his parents, "Is this man your son? Do you say that he was blind when he was born? {If that is so,} then how is he able to see at this time?" **20**His parents replied, "We are certain that this man is our son. We are also certain that he was blind when he was born. **21**Nevertheless, we do not know how he is able to see at this time. We also do not know who enabled him to see. Ask him. He is old enough to speak on his own behalf." **22**(The Jewish leaders had previously agreed among themselves that they would ban anyone who declared that Jesus was the Messiah from entering the Jewish meeting place. Because of this, the man's parents were afraid of them and told them those things.) **23**That is also why they said to the Jewish leaders, "Ask him. He is old enough."

24So the Jewish leaders summoned for a second time the man who had been blind. They told him, “Glorify God {by speaking only the truth}! We ourselves are certain that this man {who you say healed you} is sinful.” **25**The man whom Jesus healed replied, “I do not know if he is sinful or not. One thing I do know is that I used to be blind, but now I can see.” **26**They then asked him, “What did he do to you {in order to heal you}? How did he enable you to see?” **27**He replied, “I have already told you the answers to those questions, but you did not listen to what I said. Why do you want me to tell you again? Could it be that you also desire to become his disciples?” **28**Then they spoke insultingly to him: “You are that man’s disciple! As for us, we are Moses’s disciples! **29**We are certain that God spoke to Moses {long ago}. As for this man, we do not even know where he came from!” **30**The man replied, “I am amazed! You do not even know where he came from, but he is the one who enabled me to see! **31**We are certain that God does not respond to {the prayers of} sinful people. Rather, he responds to {the prayers of} people who worship him and who do what he wants them to do. **32**Never before has anyone ever heard that someone enabled a man to see who was blind when he was born! **33**If this man had not come from God, he could not have done even one {miracle like that}!” **34**The Jewish leaders replied to him, “You were born blind entirely as a result of {your parents’} sins! How dare you teach us!” Then they banned him from the Jewish meeting place.

35Jesus heard that the Jewish leaders had banned the man he had healed from the Jewish meeting place. When he {searched for him and} found him, he asked him, “Do you trust the Son of Man?” **36**The man answered, “Sir, who is he? {Please tell me,} so that I may trust him.” **37**Jesus told him, “You have already seen him. I am that very person who is talking to you now.” **38**The man said, “Lord, I trust {that you are the Son of Man}.” Then he went down on his knees and worshiped Jesus.

39Jesus said, “I have come into this world in order to judge its people. {The result will be} that the people who realize they do not perceive God’s truth may perceive it, like a blind person becoming able to see. {Another result will be that} the people who think they perceive God’s truth will not perceive it, like a person who sees and becomes blind.” **40**When some of the Pharisees who were near Jesus heard him say this, they asked him, “Do you think that we also cannot perceive God’s truth, like blind people?” **41**Jesus replied, “If you recognized that you are spiritually blind, you would not be guilty of sin. However, because you claim to perceive God’s truth, like someone who sees, you are still guilty of your sin.”

Chapter 10

1“I am telling you the truth: Anyone who enters into the sheep pen by any way other than the pen’s gate is a thief or bandit {who has come to steal the sheep}. **2**The man who enters the sheep pen through the gate is the shepherd {who takes care} of the sheep. **3**The man who guards the gate {when the shepherd is away} opens the gate for the shepherd {when he comes}. The sheep hear the sound of the shepherd’s voice. He summons by name {each of} the sheep that belong to him and leads them out of the pen. **4**After the shepherd has brought out of the pen all of the sheep that belong to him, he walks in front of them. His sheep follow him {from behind} because they recognize the sound of his voice. **5**His sheep will never follow someone whom they do not know. Rather, they will run away from him because they do not recognize the voices of people they do not know.”

6Jesus told this illustration {from the work that shepherds do} to the Pharisees. Nevertheless, they did not understand what the illustration meant. **7**So Jesus spoke to them again, “I am telling you the truth: I am the gate through which the sheep enter into the sheep pen. **8**All the leaders who came before me {without God’s authority} were thieves and bandits. However, the true sheep did not obey them. **9**I myself am the gate {to heaven}. God will save {from eternal punishment} anyone who comes to him by trusting in me. {Whoever trusts in me} will be like a sheep who walks around safely and finds food. **10**Your leaders are like thieves who come only to steal, kill, and destroy the sheep. I have come to give the sheep eternal life, which will be full {of blessings}.

11I myself am like a good shepherd. The good shepherd is willing to die {in order to protect and to save} his sheep, {and so am I willing to die for my disciples}. **12**{Suppose that} someone hires a man who is not a shepherd to protect sheep that do not belong to that man. When he sees a wolf coming {to kill the sheep}, he leaves the sheep

and runs away, so the wolf snatches some of them and causes some others to scatter. **13**{The hired man runs away} because he was {only protecting the sheep} in order to receive money. He does not care about what happens to the sheep. **14**I myself am like a good shepherd. {Just like a good shepherd knows his sheep and his sheep know him,} I know those who belong to me, and they know me. **15**{We know each other} in the same way that my Father and I know each other. I am willing to die for the benefit of those sheep {who belong to me}. **16**There are also sheep that belong to me and are from a different sheep pen. {They are people who are not Jews.} I must also bring them to myself. They will respond to what I say, and all those who belong to me will be united as one flock, and I will be their one shepherd. **17**My Father loves me because I will willingly die in order that I may make myself alive again. **18**Nobody is forcing me to die. Rather, I myself choose to die. I have authority to willfully die and I have authority to make myself alive again. That is the work my Father has commanded me to do."

19The Jewish leaders divided {into opposing groups} again on account of what Jesus had said. **20**Many of the Jewish leaders said, "A demon is controlling him, and he is crazy! Do not listen to him!" **21**Some other people said, "What he is saying is not something a man controlled by a demon would ever say. Surely a demon cannot possibly enable a blind person to see!"

22Then the feast to celebrate the temple dedication in Jerusalem took place. **23**Jesus was walking in the temple courtyard in the place called Solomon's Porch. **24**The Jewish leaders gathered around Jesus and said, "How long will you keep us wondering about who you are? If you are the Messiah, then tell us plainly {so that we can know}." **25**Jesus answered them, "I have told you, but you still do not believe me. The miraculous deeds I do by my Father's authority tell you what you need to know about me. **26**However, you people still do not believe in me, because you do not belong to me. You are like sheep that are not part of my flock. **27**{Just like sheep obey the voice of their shepherd,} my people respond to what I say. I know them, and they are my disciples. **28**I enable them to live forever {with God in heaven}. No one can ever destroy them, and {no one can ever} take them away from me. **29**My Father gave them to me. He is greater than anyone, and no one is able to take them away from him. **30**My father and I are one God."

31The Jewish leaders again picked up stones in order to throw them at him and kill him. **32**Jesus said to them, "You have seen me do many miraculous good deeds that my Father told me to do. For which one of them are you going to kill me with stones?" **33**The Jewish leaders replied, "We do not want to kill you with stones because you did a good deed. Rather, {we want to kill you} because you blaspheme God by claiming to be God even though you are just a man!" **34**Jesus replied to them, "In the Old Testament a prophet wrote that God said, 'I have said that you are gods.' **35**Since God called those to whom he spoke 'gods' and no one can prove that the Scripture is false, **36**why do you say that I am blaspheming God because I said that I am the Son of God? I am the one whom my Father specially selected {to belong to him} and sent into this world. **37**If I am not doing the miraculous works that my Father wants me to do, then you should not trust me. **38**However, because I am doing these {miraculous} deeds, you should trust {what} these deeds {reveal about me} even though you do not trust me. {You should do that} in order to learn and comprehend that my Father and I are completely united."

39Because {he said these things}, the Jewish leaders tried again to arrest Jesus, but he got away from them.

40Then Jesus went back over {on the east side of} the Jordan River. He went to the place where John the Baptizer had baptized people at the beginning {of his ministry}. Jesus stayed there for a while. **41**Many people came to Jesus there. They said, "John the Baptizer never performed a miraculous sign, but everything that John said about this man is true!" **42**Many people trusted in him in that place.

Chapter 11

1A man named Lazarus became very ill. He lived in the village of Bethany where his sisters Mary and Martha also lived. **2**This is the same Mary who later would pour perfume on the Lord and would wipe {the oil off of} his feet with her hair. It was her brother Lazarus who was ill. **3**So the two sisters sent someone to tell Jesus about Lazarus.

They said, “Lord, the one whom you love is very ill. {Please come!}” **4**When Jesus heard about Lazarus’ illness, he said, “This illness will not end in Lazarus’ death. Rather, the purpose of this illness is to reveal how great God is. Lazarus became ill in order that the illness may reveal how great I, the Son of God, am.” **5**(Jesus loved Martha, her sister Mary, and Lazarus.) **6**So when Jesus heard that Lazarus was ill, he deliberately remained where he was for two more days.

7Then after {those two days} Jesus said to his disciples, “Let us go back to the region of Judea.” **8**His disciples said, “Teacher, the Jewish leaders {in Judea} currently want to kill you with stones! You surely should not return there again!” **9**Jesus replied, “You know that there are 12 hours of daylight. The person who walks during the daytime will walk safely because the light allows him to see where he is going. **10**However, when a person walks during the night, he will stumble because there is no light to allow him to see where he is going.”

11After saying these things, he told them, “Our friend Lazarus is sleeping, but I will go there to wake him up.” **12**So his disciples told him, “Lord, if he is sleeping, then he will get well.” **13**(Jesus was actually speaking about Lazarus’ death, but his disciples thought that he was talking about actual sleep.) **14**So Jesus told them clearly, “Lazarus is dead. **15**And I rejoice that I was not there {when he died}. {I let this happen} so that you may trust in me. {This is} for your benefit. Rather than staying here, let us go to where he is.” **16**So Thomas, whom they called ‘The Twin,’ said to the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go with the Teacher in order that we may die with him.”

17So when Jesus arrived {in the village of Bethany,} he learned that people had already put Lazarus’ dead body in a tomb four days before then. **18**(Jerusalem was only about three kilometers away from the village of Bethany.) **19**Many Jewish people came to Martha and Mary {in Bethany} in order to console both of them concerning their brother Lazarus’ death. **20**When Martha heard {someone say} that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him. Mary {did not go with her} but stayed in the house. **21**When Martha met Jesus, she said to him, “Lord, if you had only been here sooner, my brother would not be dead! **22**However, even now {that he is dead} I am certain that God will do for you whatever you ask him to do.” **23**Jesus told her, “Your brother will live again.” **24**Martha told him, “I am certain that my brother will live again when God raises all dead people on the last day {when he judges everyone}.” **25**Jesus told her, “I am the one who causes dead people to live again. I am the one who gives people eternal life. Whoever trusts in me will live forever, even if his body dies. **26**All those who receive eternal life and trust in me will surely live forever. Do you believe that this is true?” **27**Martha told him, “Yes, I do, Lord! I do indeed believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God. {You are} the one whom God promised would come into this world.”

28After she said that, she returned {to the house} and secretly summoned her sister Mary. She told Mary, “The Teacher has arrived, and he is summoning you.” **29**When Mary heard what her sister said, she rose quickly and went out to meet Jesus. **30**(At that time Jesus had not yet entered the village of Bethany. Rather, he was still at the place where Martha had met him.) **31**The Jewish people who were comforting Mary in her house saw her rise quickly and go outside, so they followed her. They thought that she was going to the tomb {where they had buried Lazarus} in order to grieve there.

32When Mary arrived at the place where Jesus had spoken to Martha and saw him, she threw herself down on the ground in front of his feet. She told him, “Lord, if you had only been here sooner, my brother would not be dead!” **33**When Jesus saw her grieving, and the Jewish people with her also grieving, he became extremely agitated. **34**He asked, “Where have you buried his body?” They told him, “Lord, come and see {where he is}.” **35**Jesus started crying. **36**So the Jewish people {who were with Mary} said among themselves, “See how much he loved Lazarus!” **37**However, others among them said, “He could enable the blind man to see. But maybe he didn’t have enough power to prevent this man from dying!”

38Jesus then was emotionally agitated again when he came to the tomb. (It was a cave, and a large rock was covering its entrance.) **39**Jesus said, “Remove the rock from the cave’s entrance.” {However,} Lazarus’ sister Martha told him, “Lord, by this time his body will smell bad because he died four days ago.” **40**Jesus told her, “I surely told you that if you trusted me, you would see how great God is!”

41So some people removed the rock from the cave's entrance. Jesus looked up toward heaven and said, "Father, I thank you for listening to me. **42**I know that you always listen to me. Nevertheless, I said that for the sake of the people standing here. I said this in order that they might be confident that you sent me." **43**After he said that prayer, he shouted loudly, "Lazarus, come out of the tomb!" **44**The man who had died came out of the tomb! {The people who prepared him for burial} had wrapped his feet and hands with strips of cloth and had wrapped a cloth around his face. {So} Jesus told the people standing there, "Take off the strips of cloth that bind him. Allow him to go."

45As a result, many of the Jewish people who had come to comfort Mary and who had witnessed what Jesus had done trusted him. **46**Nevertheless, some of the people there went to the Pharisees and reported to them what Jesus had done. **47**So the ruling priests and the Pharisees gathered together the members of the highest Jewish ruling council. They were saying to each other, "What are we going to do about this man? He is performing many miraculous signs. **48**If we allow him to keep doing these miracles, everyone will trust in him {and make him their king}. Then the Roman army will come and destroy both our temple and our people!"

49One member of this council was Caiaphas. He was the high priest during that year. He told them, "You people know nothing! **50**You do not realize that it would be much better for you to have one man die on behalf of the people than let the Romans kill all of the Jewish people." **51**(Caiaphas did not say this because he thought of it himself. Rather, since he was the high priest that year, he was prophesying that Jesus would die on behalf of the Jewish people. **52**{He was also prophesying that Jesus would die,} not only for the Jewish people, but also in order to gather into one people all the children of God whom God has dispersed throughout the world.) **53**So in the days following the day that Caiaphas prophesied, the Jewish council made plans to kill Jesus.

54Because of that, Jesus no longer traveled around publicly among his Jewish opponents. Instead, he left Jerusalem and went to a town called Ephraim that is in the region near the desolate area. He remained there with his disciples {for a while}.

55At that time the Jewish Passover celebration was about to take place. Many people went up to Jerusalem from the region. They came before the Passover celebration began in order to clean themselves {according to the Jewish rules for attending the celebration}. **56**The people {who came to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration} were searching for Jesus. While they were standing in the temple {courtyard}, they asked each other, "What do you think? He will surely not come to the Passover celebration!" **57**{Some time earlier} the Jewish ruling priests and the Pharisees had made a command that anyone who found out where Jesus was must report his location to them so that they could arrest him.

Chapter 12

1Jesus arrived in the village of Bethany six days before the Jewish Passover celebration began. {Bethany was the village} where Lazarus dwelled. He was the man whom Jesus made alive again after he had died. **2**There in Bethany, some of Jesus' friends gave a dinner to honor Jesus. Martha served the food to the guests, and Lazarus was among those who were sitting together and eating with Jesus. **3**Mary then took a bottle that contained about half a liter of very expensive perfume, which was pure oil from nard plants, and she poured it out on Jesus' feet and then wiped his feet with her hair. The pleasant scent of the perfume filled the entire house.

4However, Judas Iscariot {objected}. (He was the one among Jesus' disciples who would soon help the Jewish leaders arrest Jesus.) He said, **5**"We should have sold this perfume for the money that a man can earn in 300 days of work. Then we could have given that money to poor people!" **6**(Judas did not say this because he cared about poor people. Rather, {he said this} because he was a thief. He kept charge of the bag that held their money, but he would steal the money that people gave him to put in the bag.) **7**So Jesus said, "Leave her alone! She saved the perfume in order to keep it to prepare me for the time when I {die and} am buried. **8**{She did the right thing} because poor people will always be among you {whom you can help}, but I will not be with you much longer."

9A large crowd of Jews heard that Jesus was {in Bethany}, so they went there. {They came} not only because Jesus was there, but also because they wanted to see Lazarus. He was the man whom Jesus made alive again after he had died. **10**By contrast, the ruling priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well as Jesus. **11**{The ruling priests wanted to kill Lazarus} because he was the reason why many of the Jews were no longer believing what they were teaching and were trusting in Jesus instead.

12The next day the large crowd of people that had come {to Jerusalem} to {celebrate} the Passover celebration found out that Jesus was on his way there. **13**So they cut branches off of palm trees and went out to the road to welcome him {as he came into the city}. They were shouting, "Please, save us! May God bless the one who comes with his authority. That one is the King of Israel!" **14**When Jesus came near to Jerusalem, he found a young donkey and sat on it {in order to ride it into the city}. {By doing this,} he fulfilled what some prophets had written in Scripture:

15"Do not be afraid, you who live in Jerusalem.

Look! Your King is coming.

He is riding on a donkey's colt!"

16When these events happened, his disciples did not understand that they were a fulfillment of what those prophets had written. However, after God glorified Jesus {by bringing him back to life}, they remembered what the prophets had written about him and that people had done those things to him.

17The crowd of people that was following along with Jesus kept telling others that they had seen Jesus summon Lazarus to come out of the tomb and had seen Jesus make him alive again after he had died. **18**A different crowd of people went out of the city gate to meet Jesus. {They did so} because they heard that he had done the miraculous sign of {making Lazarus alive again}. **19**So the Pharisees said to each other, "See! We are failing to stop him. Look! Everyone is becoming his disciples!"

20Some people who were not Jews were among the people who went up {to Jerusalem} in order to worship God during the Passover celebration. **21**They came to Philip, who was from the city of Bethsaida, which is in the region of Galilee. They asked him, "Sir, would you introduce us to Jesus?" **22**Then Philip reported this to Andrew, and they both went and told Jesus {about the Greeks}. **23**Jesus answered Philip and Andrew, "It is now the time for God to show everyone how great I, the Son of Man, am. **24**I am telling you the truth: {My life is like a seed.} Unless a seed of wheat is planted in the ground and dies, it will only be one seed. But if it dies in the ground, then it will grow and produce much wheat. **25**Anyone who wants to keep on living more than {be my disciple} will die, but anyone who wants to {be my disciple} more than to keep on living in this sinful world will keep his life forever. **26**Anyone who wants to serve me must be my disciple. My servant will be with me {in heaven}. My Father will honor anyone who serves me.

27At this moment I feel greatly distressed. I should surely not say, 'Father, prevent me from experiencing this time {when I will suffer and die!}' No, {I will not do that,} because this is the very reason I have lived up to this time {when I will suffer and die}. **28**Father, show how great you are!"

Then God spoke from heaven, "I have already shown how great I am; I will do it again!" **29**The crowd of people that was standing there heard the voice of God as well. Some of them said it was just the sound of thunder. Some other people said that an angel had spoken to Jesus. **30**Jesus replied to them, "The voice that you heard was God's voice. {He did not speak} for my benefit, but for yours! **31**Now is the time for God to judge the people in this world. Now is the time when he will throw out {Satan, who is} the one who rules this world. **32**As for me, when people raise me high {on a cross}, I will cause all peoples to come to me." **33**(He said this to let the people know the way he would soon die.)

34The crowd of people then replied to him, "We have learned from Scripture that the Messiah will live forever. So why do you say that the Son of Man will be lifted up {to die on a cross}? Who is this 'Son of Man' you are speaking

about?” **35**Jesus told them, “I am the light {that reveals God’s truth and goodness}. I will be with you only a little
longer. Live according to my example while I am still here in order to prevent the darkness {that is sin and evil}
from controlling you. Those who live sinfully are like people who wander around in darkness, not knowing where
they are going! **36**Trust in me, the light {that reveals God’s truth and goodness}, while I am still with you. {Do this} in
order to be God’s people, {those who know his truth and goodness}.”

After he said those things, Jesus left them and hid himself from the people. **37**Even though Jesus had done many
miraculous signs in front of the people, most of them did not trust in him. **38**Their unbelief happened in order to
make come true what Isaiah the prophet had written {long ago}:

“Lord, no one has believed what we said!

{It seems like} no one has seen the power that the Lord has revealed!” **39**They could not trust in Jesus for this
reason: Isaiah had also written, **40**“The Lord has made them unable to perceive what they see,

and he has made them stubborn.

{He has done this} in order that they would not perceive what they see,

and would not truly understand,

and would not turn away from sin to God, and I would not forgive them.”

41Isaiah wrote that {long ago}, because he saw how great Jesus is and spoke concerning him.

42Although this was true, many members of the highest Jewish governing council trusted in Jesus. Nevertheless,
they did not tell others {that they trusted in Jesus}, because they feared that the Pharisees would ban them from
entering the Jewish meeting place. **43**{They feared this} because they preferred that other people honor them
rather than that God would honor them.

44Jesus spoke loudly {to a crowd of people}, “Those who trust me are not only trusting me but also {are trusting my
Father}, who sent me. **45**Those who see me are also seeing my Father, who sent me. **46**I came into this world as the
light {that reveals God’s truth and goodness} to everyone in the world in order that anyone who trusts in me will
not stay in the darkness {that is sin and evil}.

47I do not condemn anyone who listens to my teachings but refuses to obey them, because I did not come into this
world in order to condemn the people in the world. Rather, I came into this world in order to save them {from
being punished for their sins}. **48**Anyone who rejects me and does not accept {and obey} my teachings will be
condemned according to the very teachings I have spoken. On the last day {when God judges everyone,} God will
judge that person on the basis of my teachings. **49**{This will happen} because I did not speak on my own authority.
Rather, my Father himself, who sent me, commanded me regarding what I should say and how I should say it. **50**I
am certain that what my Father has commanded me to say is what people must believe in order to live forever {in
heaven}. So I say exactly what my Father has told me to say.”

Chapter 13

1On the day before the Passover celebration would begin, Jesus knew that it was the time for him to leave this
world and to return to his Father. He always loved his disciples who were with him in this world, and he loved them
to the uttermost. **2**When Jesus and his disciples were having their evening meal, the devil had already caused Judas,
Simon Iscariot’s son, to think that he should help the Jewish leaders arrest Jesus. **3**Jesus knew that his Father had
given him complete power and authority over everything, and he also knew that he came from God and would
soon return to God. **4**{Because he knew those things,} Jesus got up from the table where they were eating the
evening meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. **5**He poured some water into a

large bowl and started washing his disciples' feet and wiping them dry with the towel that he had wrapped around his waist.

6When he came to Simon Peter {to wash his feet}, Peter told him, "Lord, you should not wash my feet!" **7**Jesus replied to him, "Right now you do not understand what I am doing, but later you will understand." **8**Peter said, "You will surely never wash my feet!" Jesus replied to him, "If I do not wash you, then you will not inherit God's blessings with me." **9**Simon Peter told him, "Lord, do not wash my feet only! Wash my hands and my head also!" **10**Jesus told him, "Anyone whom someone has washed only needs to wash his feet. The rest of his body is clean. You disciples are clean, but not all {of you are clean}." **11**({Jesus said this about being spiritually clean,} because he knew who was going to help the Jewish leaders arrest him. That is the reason he said, "Not all of you are clean.")

12After he finished washing their feet, he put his outer clothing on again. Then he sat down at the table again and told them, "You must understand what I have just done for you! **13**You rightly call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' because that is what I am. **14**Since I, your teacher and Lord, have {humbly served you by} washing your feet, you also should {humbly serve each other by} washing each other's feet. **15**{By washing your feet} I have given you an example to follow in order that you should {humbly serve each other} as I have {humbly} served you. **16**I am telling you the truth: Just as a servant is not more important than his master, nor is a messenger more important than the person who has sent him, {you are not more important than me}. **17**Since you now know {that you should humbly serve each other}, God will bless you if you do so.

18I am not saying that all of you will be blessed. I know well the people whom I have chosen {to be my disciples}. However, what is about to happen must take place in order that what a prophet wrote in scripture can come true: 'The one who shared a meal with me as a friend has opposed me.'

19From now on I am telling you what will happen before it happens in order that, when it does happen, you may trust that I am {God}. **20**I am telling you the truth: Whoever accepts the one I send out also accepts me; and whoever accepts me also accepts my Father who sent me."

21After Jesus said this, he felt disturbed. He solemnly declared, "I am telling you the truth: One of you is going to give me up {to my opponents}." **22**His disciples kept looking at one another and wondering who among them he was talking about. **23**One of his disciples, {John} whom Jesus loved, was sitting at the table beside Jesus. **24**Simon Peter made a gesture to him to indicate that he should ask Jesus which disciple he was talking about. **25**So John leaned back against Jesus and {quietly} asked him, "Lord, who is the one who will betray you?" **26**Jesus replied, "It is the man to whom I will give this piece of bread after I dip it in the bowl." Then he dipped the bread in the bowl and gave it to Judas, Simon Iscariot's son. **27**As soon as Judas took the piece of bread from Jesus, Satan took control of him. Jesus then told him, "Do quickly what you have planned to do." **28**(No one else among those sitting at the table knew why Jesus had said that to Judas. **29**Some of them thought that Jesus was telling him to go and buy some things that they needed for the Passover celebration or to give some money to the poor. {They thought this} because Judas had the bag that held their money.) **30**So after Judas took the bread from Jesus, he immediately went out. (It was night.)

31So after Judas left, Jesus said, "Now God has shown people how great I, the Son of Man, am. I have also shown people how great God is. **32**God himself will show {people} how great I, the Son of Man, am, and he will do this right away.

33{You whom I love as though you were my} children, I will be with you only a little while longer. Then you will look for me, but it will be just like I told the Jewish leaders and am telling you now: You will not be able to come to the place where I am going. **34**I now give you this new command in order that you might love each other: You must love each other in the same way that I have loved you. **35**If you love each other, everyone {who sees that love} will know that you are my disciples."

36Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied, "You cannot go with me now to the place where I am going, but you will go there later." **37**Peter told him, "Lord, why can't I go with you now? I am willing to

die for you!” **38**Jesus replied, “You are not really willing to die for me! I am telling you the truth: You will surely say three times that you do not know me before the rooster crows {in the morning}!”

Chapter 14

1“Do not be distressed. Trust God. Trust me as well. **2**There are many places for people to dwell where my Father dwells. If that were not true, I would have told you so, because I will go there to prepare a place for you to dwell. **3**And after I go there to prepare a place for you to dwell, I will return and take you to be with me, in order for you also to be with me where I am. **4**You know how to go to the place where I am going.”

5Thomas said to him, “Lord, we have no idea where you are going! We cannot possibly know how to go there!” **6**Jesus told him, “I am how people can go there. I am the one who reveals what is true about God, and the one who gives eternal life to people. The only way people can come to my Father is by trusting me. **7**Since you know who I am, you know my Father also. From this time forward, you know him, and it is as though you have seen him.”

8Philip said to Jesus, “Lord, let us see the Father and that will satisfy us!” **9**Jesus said to him, “I have been with you all for such a long time. Surely you know me, Philip! Those who have seen me are like those who have seen my Father. So you have no reason to say ‘Let us see the Father’! **10**You surely must believe that I and my Father are completely united! I did not speak all that I have spoken to you on my own. Rather, my Father who is united with me is working his own miraculous works through me. **11**Trust me when I say that I and my Father are completely united! Otherwise, if you are not going to trust what I say, at least trust me on account of all the miraculous works {that you have seen me do}. **12**I am telling you the truth: Whoever trusts in me will also do the miraculous works that I do. He will do even greater works than those I do, because I am going to my Father. **13**I will do anything that you request as my representative. I will do this in order that I, his Son, might show how great my Father is. **14**I will do anything that you request from me as my representative.

15If you really love me, you will obey everything that I have commanded you. **16**Then I will request from my Father, and he will answer me by giving you another one to help you in order for him to be with you forever. **17**{He is} the Holy Spirit who declares what is true about God. The unbelieving people in the world cannot accept him, because they do not see him or know him. You disciples know this Spirit because he dwells with you, and he will later dwell in you. **18**I will not leave you without anyone to take care of you. I will soon return to you. **19**In a little while the unbelievers in the world will not see me anymore, but you yourselves will see me again. Because I will soon live again, you too will live again. **20**When you see me again, you will know that I am united with my Father and that you and I are completely united. **21**Whoever knows and obeys what I command truly loves me. And my Father loves whoever loves me. I will love that person too, and I will reveal myself to that person.”

22Judas (not Judas Iscariot, {but a different disciple with the same name}) spoke to Jesus. {He said,} “Lord, what has changed to cause you to reveal yourself just to us and not to all the people in the world?” **23**Jesus replied to him, “Whoever loves me obeys my teaching. My Father will love that person. He and I will come to that person and dwell inside that person. **24**Whoever does not love me does not obey my teachings. What you have just heard me say I did not say on my own. Rather, {what I have said has come} from my Father, who has sent me. **25**I have said these things to you while I am still with you. **26**But my Father will send the Holy Spirit in my place. He is the one who will help you. He will teach you all {of God’s truth that you need to know}. He will also cause you to remember all the things that I have told you. **27**As I leave you I give you a peaceful feeling. It is my peaceful feeling that I am giving to you. I give to you {a peaceful feeling} in a different manner than the people in the world give it. Do not be distressed or afraid.

28You heard me tell you that I am going away and will later return to you. If you really loved me, you would rejoice that I am returning to my Father {in heaven}, because he is superior to me. **29**I have told you these things now before they happen so that you will continue to trust me when they do happen. **30**I will not be able to talk with you much longer, because {Satan,} the one who rules this world, is coming. But he has no control over me. **31**However,

this will happen in order for the people in the world to know that I love my Father and I will do exactly what my Father has commanded me to do. Rise, let us leave this place."

Chapter 15

1"I am like a genuine vine {that grows fruit}. My Father is like a gardener {who takes care of it}. **2**My Father cuts off and removes every branch that seems to be part of me but does not produce fruit. As for every branch that produces fruit, he cleans it by pruning it so that it may produce even more fruit. **3**You are like branches that have already been cleaned by pruning because of the teaching that I have told you before. **4**Stay united with me, and I will stay united with you. As the branch cannot produce any fruit unless it stays attached to the vine, so you cannot produce spiritual fruit unless you stay united with me.

5I am like the vine; you are like the branches. If you stay united with me and I stay united with you, you will produce a lot of fruit. {This is true} because you cannot do anything without my help. **6**As for anyone who does not stay united with me, that person is like a branch that the gardener cuts off and throws away. After such branches dry up, the gardener's workers pick them up and throw them into a fire and burn them up. **7**If you stay united with me and obey what I have taught you, you can request anything from God that you want, and he will grant your request. **8**You show people how great my Father is by producing a lot of fruit and being my disciples.

9I have loved you in the same way that my Father has loved me. Now keep living in a way that is appropriate for those whom I love. **10**If you obey what I have commanded you, you will be acting in a way that is appropriate for those whom I love, just like I have obeyed what my Father has commanded me, and I act in a way that is appropriate for someone whom he loves. **11**I told you these things in order that you may be as joyful as I am and {in order that} you may be joyful to the greatest degree. **12**This is what I am commanding you to do: Love each other in the way that I have loved you. **13**No one has greater love than a person who is willing to die for his friends. **14**You are really my friends if you keep doing what I have commanded you to do. **15**I am not going to call you my servants any longer, because a servant does not understand what his master is doing. I now call you friends, because I have made you understand everything that my Father has told me. **16**You did not choose {to be my disciples}. Rather, I chose you {to be my disciples} and assigned you {to this role} in order that you would go out and produce spiritual fruit and {in order that} the fruit you produce should last forever. {I also chose you} in order that my Father would give you everything that you request from him as my representatives. **17**I command you to do these things in order that you would love one another.

18Since the people who oppose God in the world detest you, you must realize that they detested me first. **19**If you were part of the people who oppose God in the world, those unbelievers would love you as they love their own. However, I chose you to come out from among them. The people who oppose God in the world detest you because you are not part of them. **20**Remember that I told you that a servant is not more important than his master. Since they have caused me to suffer, they will certainly cause you to suffer as well. If any of them have obeyed my teaching, they will also obey what you teach. **21**Yet the unbelievers in this world will do all these hateful things to you because you represent me {and} because they do not know my Father who has sent me here. **22**If I had not come and taught them {God's truth}, they would not have been guilty {of rejecting me and my message}. However, {since I have come and taught them}, now they do not have any excuse for their sin. **23**Whoever detests me also detests my Father. **24**If I had not performed miraculous works among them that no one else has ever done, they would not be guilty of sin. Yet, as it is, they have seen these works and detest me. They also detest my Father. **25**However, this has happened in order that these words that a prophet wrote in their scriptures would come true: 'They hated me for no reason.'

26When I send to you from my Father the one who will help you, he will tell people who I am. He is the Holy Spirit, who declares what is true about God and goes forth from my Father. **27**You also must tell everyone about me, because you have been with me since the very first days when I began my work."

Chapter 16

1I told you about these things that will happen so that you would continue trusting in me {when they do happen}.
2The Jews who oppose me will ban you from entering the Jewish meeting places. Yet {something even worse will happen.} The time is coming when all the people who will kill you will think that they are pleasing God by doing so.
3They will do such things because they have never known who I really am, nor who my Father is. **4**I have told you about these things that will happen in order that when they happen, you will remember that I told you they would happen. I did not tell you about them in the very first days when I began my work, because I was with you then.

5"Now I am going back to my Father who sent me. Yet now none of you is asking me where I am going! **6**You are very sad because I have told you these things. **7**Nevertheless, I now tell you true information: It is better for you that I leave {than that I stay}. {This is true} because if I do not leave, then the one who will help you will not come to you. However, If I go away, then I will send him to you. **8**When that one who will help comes, he will convict people in the world of the sins {they have committed}. {He will convict them} of not being righteous, and {he will convict} them that God will judge them. **9**{He will convict people} of their sin, because they have sinned by not trusting in me. **10**{He will convict people} of not being righteous, because I am going back to my Father, and you will no longer see me {as the example of how to be righteous}. **11**{He will convict people} that God will judge them, because he has condemned {Satan, who is} the one who rules this world.

12I want to tell you many more things. However, if I tell you now, you will not be able to accept them. **13**When the Holy Spirit, who declares what is true about God, comes, he will enable you to understand all the truth {you need to know}. {He can do so} because he will not speak from his own authority. Rather, he will say whatever he hears from God, and he will tell you ahead of time about things that will happen. **14**The Holy Spirit will show how great I am by telling you what he has heard from me. **15**Everything my Father has belongs to me. That is why I said that the Holy Spirit will tell you what he has heard from me.

16After a short time you will not see me, and after a short time, you will see me again." **17**Some of his disciples then asked one another, "What does Jesus mean when he says to us, 'After a short time you will not see me, and after a short time, you will see me again'? And {what does he mean when he says}, 'Because I am going back to my Father'?" **18**So they kept asking, "What does 'after a short time' mean? We do not understand what he is saying."

19Jesus recognized that his disciples wanted to ask him more questions. So he said to them, "You are asking each other what I meant when I said, 'After a short time you will not see me, and after a short time, you will see me again.' **20**I am telling you the truth: You will cry and mourn, but the people who oppose God in the world will rejoice. You will be very sad, but you will change from being sad to being joyful. **21**A woman experiences pain when she gives birth to a child, because it is the time for her to give birth. Yet she forgets that she suffered after she has given birth to the child, because she is joyful about the fact that she has brought a human being into the world.
22In the same way, although you are sad at this time, I will see you again, and you will rejoice, and no one will stop you from rejoicing. **23**When you see me again, you will not ask me anything. I am telling you the truth: My Father will give you whatever you request from him as my representatives. **24**Up to now you have not requested anything {from my Father} as my representatives. Request {anything from my Father} and you will receive {whatever you request}. God will give it to you in order that you may be joyful to the greatest degree.

25I have told you these things using figurative language, but there will soon be a time when I will not use that kind of language to speak with you anymore. Rather, I will tell you about my Father using language that you can easily understand. **26**When you see me again, you will request {anything from God} as my representatives, and I will not have to ask my Father on your behalf, **27**because my Father himself loves you because you love me and trust that I came here from God. **28**I came from my Father and entered this world. Again I tell you that I will leave this world and go back to my Father."

29His disciples responded, "Finally! Now you are using language that we can easily understand and not using figurative language. **30**Now we understand that you know everything. There is no need for anyone to ask you

questions {because you already know what that person will ask}. This is why we trust that you came here from God."

31 Jesus replied to them, "Now you finally trust me! 32 Look! There will soon be a time, and that time will be very
soon, when others will scatter you everywhere. Each of you will go to his own home, and you will leave me by
myself. However, I will not be by myself, because my Father is always with me. 33 I have told you all these things that
will happen in order that you may feel peaceful {because you are united} with me. In this world you will be afflicted,
but be brave! I have defeated the people who oppose God in the world!"

Chapter 17

1 After Jesus told his disciples about these things that would happen, he looked up toward heaven and said, "Father,
it is now time {for me to suffer and die}. Show everyone how great I, your Son, am in order that I may show
everyone how great you are. 2 {Please do this} because you gave me authority over all people in order that I might
enable all those whom you chose to come to me to live forever {with me in heaven}. 3 This is what it means to live
forever: to know you, who are the only real God, and to know me, Jesus the Messiah, the one whom you have sent
into the world. 4 I have shown everyone how great you are while I have been on the earth. {I did this} by finishing
the work that you assigned me to do. 5 Father, at this time show how great I am in your presence with the same
greatness that I had in your presence before the time we created the world.

6 I have shown who you really are to the men whom you have given me from among the people in the world. They
belonged to you and you have given them to me. They have obeyed your teaching. 7 At this time they know that
everything you have given me has come from you. 8 {They know this} because I have told them the teachings that
you told me. They themselves accepted those teachings, and they are certain that I came from you, and they
believe that you sent me here. 9 I am praying for them. I am not praying for the people who oppose you in the
world. Rather, {I am praying} for those people whom you gave me, because they belong to you. 10 All the disciples
that are mine belong to you, and {all the disciples} that belong to you are mine. They show everyone how great I
am. 11 I will not stay in this sinful world any longer. However, my disciples are staying in it. I will soon return to you.
My Father, who is set apart, keep them safe by your same power that you gave to me, in order that they may be
united in the same way that we are united. 12 During the time that I have been with them, I have kept them safe by
your same power that you gave to me. I have guarded them, and only one of them will be eternally ruined. {He is}
the one whom you had destined to be eternally ruined in order that the scriptures would come true.

13 At this time I am about to return to you. I have said these things while I am in this sinful world in order that I may
give them my complete joy. 14 I have told them your teaching. {Thus the people who oppose you in} the world have
detested them because, like me, they do not belong to those who oppose you. 15 I am not requesting that you take
my disciples out of this sinful world. Rather, {I am requesting} that you keep them safe from being harmed by
Satan, the evil one. 16 Like me, they do not belong to the people who oppose you in the world. 17 Set my disciples
apart to serve you by {enabling them to know and live according to} what is true. Your teaching is what is true. 18 I
am sending them among the people in the world in the same way that you sent me among them. 19 I set myself
apart as a sacrifice on their behalf in order that they also may set themselves apart to serve you by {knowing and
living according to} what is true."

20 Now I am praying not only for these disciples here, but {I am praying} also for those people who will trust in me
by means of what my disciples say. 21 {I pray} that they may all be united in the same way that you, my Father, and I
are completely united. {I pray} that they may also be united to us in order that the people in the world might know
that you sent me here. 22 In order that they may be united in the same way that we are united, I have honored the
people who trust in me just like you honored me. 23 {This means that} I am united with them, and you are united
with me. {I have done this} in order that they may be completely united together in order that the people in the
world may know that you sent me here and that you love the people who trust in me in the same way that you love
me.

24"My Father, I want these people whom you have given to me to be with me where I will be in heaven in order that they can see how glorious I am. You made me glorious because you have loved me from before the time when we created the universe.

25My Father, who always does what is right, the people who oppose you in the world do not know who you are, but I know who you are. These people who trust me know that you have sent me here. **26**I have made them know who you are. I will continue to do so in order that they may love others like you love me and in order that I may be united with them."

Chapter 18

1After Jesus finished praying, he left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side of the valley they entered into a grove {of olive trees}.

2Judas is the one who was about to help Jesus' opponents arrest him. He knew the place where Jesus was because Jesus often went there with his disciples. **3**So Judas brought to that grove a group of Roman soldiers and some temple guards who had been sent by the ruling priests and Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lamps, and weapons. **4**Because Jesus knew what was going to happen to him, he went forward and asked the soldiers and temple guards, "Who are you looking for?" **5**They replied to him, "Jesus from Nazareth." Jesus told them, "I am {that person}." (Judas was standing with them. He was the one who was helping Jesus' opponents arrest him.) **6**When Jesus told them, "I am {that person}," they stepped back and involuntarily fell down to the ground. **7**Jesus then asked them again, "Who are you looking for?" They answered, "Jesus from Nazareth." **8**Jesus replied, "I told you that I am {that person}. Since I am the one whom you are looking for, let these other men go." **9**(This happened in order that these words that he had said to his Father would come true: "I did not lose even one of those whom you gave me.")

10Simon Peter had a short sword. He took it out of its sheath and struck the high priest's servant with it, cutting off his right ear. Malchus was that servant's name. **11**Jesus then told Peter, "Put your short sword back into its sheath! I must surely suffer in the way that my Father has planned for me {to suffer}!"

12The group of Roman soldiers, along with their leader and some of the temple guards from the Jewish leaders, seized Jesus and tied his hands. **13**Then they took him to Annas first, because he was Caiaphas's father-in-law, and Caiaphas was the high priest that year. **14**(It was Caiaphas who had advised the other Jewish leaders that it would be much better to have one man die on behalf of the people {than to let the Romans kill them}.)

15Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did one other disciple. Annas the high priest knew the other disciple, so he was allowed to enter the high priest's courtyard {when the soldiers and guards took} Jesus there. **16**However, Peter had to stay outside at the door. Therefore, that disciple who knew the high priest went out again and spoke to the servant girl who was watching the door. Then he was allowed to bring Peter into {the courtyard}. **17**That servant girl who was watching the door then told Peter, "You are surely one of the disciples of the man {whom they have arrested}!" He replied, "No, I am not!" **18**(It was cold, so the high priest's servants and the temple guards made a fire and were standing and warming themselves around it. Peter was also standing and warming himself there with them.)

19The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and what he had been teaching them. **20**Jesus replied to him, "I have spoken in public to everyone {who would listen}. I have always taught in the Jewish meeting places and in the temple. {I have taught in the places} where many Jews gather. I have never said anything secretly. **21**You should not ask me! Ask the people who heard what I taught them. They certainly know what I said." **22**After Jesus said this, one of the temple guards who was standing near him slapped him. He said, "You should not answer the high priest like that!" **23**Jesus replied to him, "If what I said was wrong, tell me what it was. However, if what I said was right, you should not slap me." **24**Then Annas sent Jesus to Caiaphas, the other high priest, while his hands were still tied.

25Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing and warming himself {in the courtyard}, when someone said to him, “You are surely also one of the disciples of this man whom they have arrested!” Peter denied this and said, “No, I am not!” **26**One of the high priest’s servants was a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off. He said to Peter, “Surely I saw you in the {olive tree} grove with the man whom they have arrested!” **27**Peter then again denied {that he had been with Jesus}. A rooster crowed immediately {after he did that}.

28The Jewish leaders then brought Jesus from Caiaphas’ house to the headquarters of Pilate, the Roman governor. (It was early morning. The Jewish leaders did not enter Pilate’s headquarters {because Pilate was not a Jew. If they entered a non-Jew’s home, they thought} they would defile themselves and be unable to eat the Passover celebration meal.) **29**So Pilate came out to talk to them. He asked them, “What are you accusing this man of doing?” **30**The Jewish leaders replied, “If this man were not a criminal, we would not have brought him to you!” **31**So Pilate told them, “You yourselves take him and judge him by your own law.” The Jewish leaders replied, “We want to execute him, but your Roman law prevents us from doing that.” **32**(This happened in order that what Jesus had said about how he would soon die would come true.)

33Pilate then went back inside his headquarters. He commanded soldiers to bring Jesus to him, and he asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” **34**Jesus replied, “Are you asking me this question because you thought of it yourself, or did others tell you this concerning me?” **35**Pilate replied, “I am not a Jew! Your own countrymen and the ruling priests brought you to me. What wrong have you done?” **36**Jesus replied, “The kingdom that I rule over does not belong to this sinful world. If it did, my servants would have fought in order to prevent the Jewish leaders from arresting me. But, as it is, the kingdom that I rule over does not belong to this sinful world.” **37**Then Pilate asked him, “So you are a king?” Jesus replied, “You yourself say so. This is why I was born into this world: I came in order to tell people what is true about God. Everyone who believes what is true about God accepts and obeys what I say.” **38**Pilate said to him, “Nobody knows what is really true!”

After Pilate said that, he went outside and talked to the Jewish leaders again. He told them, “I have found no evidence that this man has broken a law. **39**However, you Jews have a custom: Every year during the Passover celebration you ask me, and I release to you someone who is in prison. So do you want me to release your king to you?” **40**The Jewish leaders then shouted again, “No, do not release this man, but release Barabbas!” (Barabbas was a revolutionary.)

Chapter 19

1So at that time Pilate {ordered his soldiers to} take Jesus and beat him with whips. **2**The soldiers also took some branches with thorns on them and wound them together to make something like a crown. Then they put it on Jesus’ head and put a purple robe on him {in order to mock him}. **3**They kept approaching him and jeering at him, saying, “We salute you, King of the Jews!” and kept slapping his face.

4Pilate came outside again and said to the Jewish leaders, “Look, I am about to bring him out to you in order that you can know that I have found no evidence that this man has broken a law.” **5**So Jesus came out. He was wearing the crown made of branches with thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to the Jewish leaders, “Look, here is the man!” **6**When the ruling priests and temple guards saw Jesus, they shouted, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” Pilate told them, “You yourselves take him and crucify him! As for me, I have found no evidence that this man has broken a law.” **7**The Jewish leaders replied to Pilate, “We have a certain law that says he ought to die, because he claimed to be the Son of God.” **8**When Pilate heard that, he was more afraid {than before of what would happen to himself if he condemned Jesus to die}. **9**He entered his headquarters once more {and commanded the soldiers to bring Jesus back inside. Then} he asked Jesus, “Where did you come from?” However, Jesus did not answer his question. **10**So Pilate said to him, “You should answer me! You surely know that I have the power to release you, and I also have the power to crucify you!” **11**Jesus replied to him, “The only power you have over me is the power that God has given you. So the man who brought me to you has committed a worse sin than you are committing.”

12From that moment on, Pilate kept trying to release Jesus. However, the Jewish leaders cried out, “If you release this man, you are not loyal to Caesar! Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar.” **13**So when Pilate heard that, he {ordered his soldiers to} bring Jesus out. Then Pilate sat down {to pronounce a verdict} on the seat where he usually pronounced verdicts. This was at a place people called “The Stone Pavement,” which was “Gabbatha” in the language spoken by the Jews. **14**(It was {the day before the Passover celebration, which was} the day when the Jewish people prepared for the celebration. It was almost noon.) Pilate said to the Jewish leaders, “Look, here is your king!” **15**They shouted, “Kill him! Kill him! Crucify him!” Pilate {mocked} them by saying, “Should I {order my soldiers to} crucify your king?” The ruling priests replied, “Caesar is our only king!” **16**Then, because of what they said, Pilate ordered his soldiers to crucify Jesus. Then the soldiers took Jesus away {in order to crucify him}.

17Jesus went out, carrying his cross by himself to the place that people called “The Place of a Skull,” which was “Golgotha” in the language spoken by the Jews. **18**The soldiers crucified him at that place. They also crucified two other men with him. One man was on either side of Jesus, so that Jesus was between them.

19Pilate also {ordered someone} to write a notice on a board and fasten it to Jesus’ cross. {That person} wrote on it, ‘Jesus from Nazareth, the King of the Jews.’ **20**Many Jewish people read this notice because the place where the soldiers crucified Jesus was close to the city of Jerusalem and {because} someone wrote the notice in three languages, which were the languages spoken by Jews, Romans, and Greeks. **21**The ruling Jewish priests returned to Pilate and said, “You should not have written on that notice, ‘The King of the Jews.’ Rather, {you should have written,} ‘This man said that he is the King of the Jews’.” **22**Pilate replied, “What I {ordered my soldiers} to write on the notice is what they have written. {I will not change it.}” **23**After the soldiers had put Jesus on the cross, they took his clothes and divided them into four equal parts, one part was for each soldier. {However, they kept his} tunic {separate}. The weaver had woven this tunic from top to bottom from one piece of cloth that did not have any seams. **24**So the soldiers said to each other, “Let us not tear this tunic. Instead, let us decide who will keep it by gambling {and giving it to the winner}.” That occurred in order to make this scripture come true:

“They divided my clothes among them.

They gambled for my clothing.”

That is why the soldiers did those things.

25Jesus’ mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene were all standing near the cross that he was hanging on. **26**When Jesus saw his mother {standing there} and the disciple John whom Jesus loved standing near her, he told his mother, “Madam, here is the one who will take care of you like a son would.” **27**Next, he said to John, “Here is the one whom you will take care of like you would your own mother!” From that moment, John took her to live in his own home.

28A little while later, because Jesus knew that he had already done everything that God had sent him to do, {and} in order to make another {prophecy in} scripture come true, he said, “I am thirsty!” **29**Someone had put a jar containing cheap wine there {and Jesus was thirsty}. So the soldiers took a reed from a hyssop plant and put a sponge on it. {Then they dipped the sponge} in the cheap wine and held it up to Jesus’ mouth. **30**So Jesus drank the cheap wine and then said, “I have completed {everything that I came here to do}!” And he bowed his head and voluntarily died.

31The Jewish leaders then asked Pilate to {order his soldiers to} break the legs of the three men on crosses {so that the men would die more quickly} and take away their bodies in order that the bodies would not remain on the crosses during the Jewish day for rest. {They asked this} because it was the day when the Jewish people prepared for the Passover celebration {and the day for rest, and leaving dead bodies on crosses during those days violated Jewish law}. (Since the next day was also the day for rest, it was a very important day.) **32**So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man, who had been crucified at the same time as Jesus. {Then they broke the legs} of the other man. **33**However, when they came to Jesus, they saw that he was dead already. So they did not break his legs. **34**Instead, one of the soldiers stabbed Jesus’ side with a spear, and right away blood and water poured out {of the wound}. **35**(I, John, am the one who saw this happen and have testified about it and what I have testified is true. I

am certain that I am saying what is true; I say it in order that you may trust in Jesus as well.) **36**These things happened {to Jesus' body} in order to make {this prophecy in} scripture come true: "No one will break any of his bones."

37{They} also {made} another {prophecy in} scripture {come true}. It states: "They will look at the man whom they have stabbed."

38After these things happened, Joseph, who was a man originally from the city of Arimathea, asked Pilate to allow him to take away Jesus' body. {He did this} because he was one of Jesus' disciples. However, he did not tell anyone that, because he was afraid of the other Jewish leaders. Pilate allowed Joseph to take away Jesus' body, so Joseph went and did so. **39**Nicodemus also came. {He was the man} who had once come {and spoken} with Jesus at night. He brought a mixture of myrrh and aloe spices {to prepare Jesus' body for burial}. Those spices weighed about 33 kilograms. **40**They took Jesus' body and wrapped strips of linen cloth around it and put the {myrrh and aloe} spices {under the strips of cloth}. {They did this} according to the Jewish customs about burying bodies. **41**(There was a garden near the place where the soldiers had crucified Jesus. In the garden was a newly made burial cave. No one had yet buried anyone in that cave.) **42**So they put Jesus' body in that tomb because it was nearby and because it was the day when the Jewish people prepared for the Passover celebration {so they had to bury the body before sundown}.

Chapter 20

1Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb {where they had buried Jesus}. She saw that someone had moved the stone away from the entrance to the tomb. **2**So she ran to where Simon Peter and the other disciple, John, whom Jesus loved, {were staying}. She told them, "Some people have removed the Lord Jesus' body from the tomb, and we do not know where they have put it!" **3**When they heard this, Peter and John left where they were staying and went to the tomb. **4**They were both running, but John ran faster than Peter and reached the tomb before him. **5**When John bent down {and looked into the tomb}, he saw the strips of linen cloth {that they had wrapped around Jesus' body} lying where his body had lain, but he did not go into the tomb. **6**Simon Peter was running behind John. He arrived there as well and went inside the tomb. He also saw the strips of linen cloth lying where Jesus' body had lain. **7**Peter also saw the cloth that someone had wrapped around Jesus' head. {It was} not lying with the strips of linen cloth. Rather, someone had folded it and set it apart from them. **8**Then John, that other disciple who had reached the tomb before Peter, went inside as well. He saw these things and believed {that Jesus had become alive again}. **9**(At that time they did not understand what the prophets had written in those scriptures which said that Jesus had to die and become alive again.)

10The disciples then returned to the places where they were staying {in Jerusalem}. **11**Mary Magdalene remained standing and crying outside of the tomb. While she was crying, she bent down {and looked} inside the tomb. **12**She saw two angels wearing white clothing. {They were} sitting on the place where people had laid Jesus' body. One angel was sitting on the place where Jesus' head had been. The other angel was sitting on the place where Jesus' feet had been. **13**They asked her, "Madam, why are you crying?" She told them, "{I am crying} because some people have removed my Lord Jesus' body {from this tomb}, and I do not know where they have put it!" **14**After she said that, she turned around and saw someone standing there. {It was Jesus,} but she did not recognize him. **15**He asked her, "Madam, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?" She thought that the man speaking to her was the gardener, so she told him, "Sir, if you have carried Jesus' body away, tell me where you have put it. I will take it {and bury it again}." **16**Jesus {called her by name,} saying, "Mary!" She turned {toward him again and} said to him, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher" in the language spoken by the Jews). **17**Jesus told her, "Stop clinging to me, because I have not yet returned to {heaven to be with} my Father. Go to the disciples, my brothers, and tell them that I am about to return to {heaven to be with} my God and Father, who is also your God and Father." **18**Mary Magdalene went to Jesus' disciples and told them, "I have seen the Lord Jesus!" {She} also told them what Jesus had told her.

19On the evening of that same Sunday, the disciples had locked the doors of the place where they were staying, because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Jesus suddenly arrived and stood among them. He told them, “May God give you peace!” **20**After he said this, he showed his disciples the wounds that were in his hands and side. They were very happy when they saw the Lord Jesus! **21**Jesus then told them a second time, “May God give you peace! I am sending you {into the world} just like my Father sent me.” **22**After he said this, Jesus blew on them and said, “Accept the Holy Spirit. **23**If you forgive anyone’s sins, God will forgive that person for those sins. If you do not forgive someone’s sins, God will not forgive that person for those sins.”

24Thomas, one of Jesus’ 12 representatives, whom they called ‘The Twin,’ was not there among his other disciples while Jesus was there among them. **25**The other disciples told Thomas, “We have seen the Lord Jesus!” However, he told them, “I will only believe you if I see the holes in his hands that were caused by nails and put my fingers in them and if I put my hand into the wound on his side {that was made by a spear}.”

26Eight days later, Jesus’ disciples were again inside a house, and this time Thomas was with them. Although they had locked the doors, Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, “May God give you peace!” **27**Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger into the holes here, and see the holes in my hands, and put out your hand, and place it in the wound in my side! Stop doubting {that I became alive again}. Rather, believe {that it is true}!” **28**Thomas replied, “You are my Lord and my God!” **29**Jesus told him, “Now you believe {that I have become alive again} because you see me. God {surely} blesses those who have not seen me but yet believe {that I have become alive again}.”

30Now Jesus also did many other miraculous signs while his disciples were with him, {but} I did not write about them in this book. **31**Nevertheless, I have written about the signs in this book in order that you may trust that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. {I also wrote about these things} in order that, by trusting {that Jesus is the Messiah}, you may have eternal life through him.

Chapter 21

1After those things happened, Jesus appeared again to his disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, {which is also known as the Sea of Galilee}. This is how he appeared to them: **2**Simon Peter, Thomas (whom they called ‘The Twin’), Nathaniel (who was from Cana, which is a town in the region of Galilee), the sons of Zebedee (James and John), and two of Jesus’ other disciples were together. **3**Simon Peter told the other disciples with him, “I am going to catch some fish.” They told him, “We will go with you.” They went out and got into the boat {and fished}, but they did not catch any fish that night. **4**At dawn the next morning Jesus stood on the shore of the sea, but the disciples who were fishing did not know that it was him. **5**Jesus then called to them, “Dear friends, you do not have any fish, do you?” They replied, “We do not.” **6**He told them, “Throw your net off the right side of the boat and you will catch some fish.” So they did so, and they caught so many fish that they were not able to pull the net {into the boat}. **7**I, the disciple whom Jesus loved, then told Peter, “It is the Lord Jesus!” So when Simon Peter heard this, he put on his coat (he had taken it off to work) and jumped into the water {to swim to the shore}. **8**The rest of the disciples who had been fishing came to the shore in the boat, while pulling the net full of fish {behind the boat}. (They were not far from the shore, only 90 meters away.) **9**When they reached the shore, they saw a fire {that Jesus had prepared} and a fish he was cooking on it. {There was} also a loaf of bread. **10**Jesus told them, “Bring {over here} some of those fish that you have just caught!” **11**So Simon Peter went back {to the boat} and dragged the net to the shore. {It was} full of 153 large fish. Even though there were so many fish, the net did not tear. **12**Jesus told them, “Come {here and} eat breakfast!” None of the disciples were bold enough to ask him who he was. They knew it was the Lord Jesus. **13**Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them. He did the same with the fish. **14**(This was the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after God had caused him to become alive again.)

15When they finished eating breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these {others love me}?” Peter replied to him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus told him, “Take care of those who trust in me.” **16**Jesus asked him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He replied to him,

“Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus told him, “Take care of those who trust in me.” **17**Jesus asked him a third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was sad because Jesus asked him three times if he loved him. Peter replied to him, “Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.” Jesus told him, “Take care of those who trust in me. **18**I am telling you the truth: When you were young, you put your own clothes on, and you walked wherever you wanted to go. However, when you are old, you will extend your hands away from your body, and someone else will put clothes on you and take you where you do not want to go.” **19**(Jesus said this to indicate how Peter would die in order to show people how great God is). Then Jesus told him, “Come be my disciple!”

20When Peter turned around, he saw John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, walking behind them. John was the one who had leaned close to Jesus during the dinner {before Jesus died} and asked, “Lord, who is going to betray you?” **21**So when Peter saw John, he asked Jesus, “Lord, what is going to happen to this man?” **22**Jesus said to him, “If I want him to continue living until I return, that is not your concern! As for you, {continue to} be my disciple!” **23**Because {Jesus said this}, the rumor that the disciple John was not going to die was repeated among the believers. However, Jesus did not tell Peter that John would not die. Rather, he said, “If I want him to continue living until I return, that is not your concern!”

24I, John, am the disciple who is testifying about all these things, and I have written them down in this book. We know that what I have testified is true.

25Jesus also did so many other things that if people wrote down every one of them, I suppose that the whole world would not even be big enough to contain the books that those people would write about them.

Acts

Chapter 1

1 Dear Theophilus,

In the first book that I wrote for you, I told about many of Jesus' actions and teachings. 2 {I told you about those things} up to the moment when God took Jesus up to heaven. Before Jesus went to heaven, he gave instructions to his chosen Representatives as the Holy Spirit guided him. 3 Even though the Romans executed Jesus on a cross, God made him alive again. Jesus then went to his Representatives {and other disciples} and proved to them in many convincing ways that he truly was alive again. He met with them at different times over a period of 40 days. He talked with them about how God would rule the lives of people everywhere.

4 One time while Jesus was with his disciples, he told them, "I want you to stay here in the city of Jerusalem and wait until God our Father sends his Spirit to you. As I told you, he promised that he would do that. 5 John baptized people in water, but within a few days God is going to baptize you in the Holy Spirit."

6 One day when the Representatives were meeting together with Jesus, they asked him, "Lord, will you now become our king so that we Israelite people will have our own king once again?" 7 He replied to them, "You do not need to know when that will happen. God my Father alone has decided {when he will make me king}." 8 But when the Holy Spirit comes to you, he will enable you to tell people about me powerfully. You will do this here in the city of Jerusalem. You will do it in the nearby regions of Judea and Samaria. But you will also do it all over the world. 9 After he said that, he started to rise up {into heaven} while they watched. But then a cloud blocked their view so that they could no longer see him.

10 While they were still staring toward the sky as Jesus was going up, suddenly two angels in human form stood beside them. Their clothes shone brightly. 11 One of the angels said, "You men who come from Galilee, you do not need to look up at the sky any longer! Someday this same Jesus, whom God took from you up into heaven, will come back {to earth}. He will return in the same way that you just now saw him go up to heaven."

12 Then {after the two angels left}, the Representatives returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which is a short distance from Jerusalem. 13 After they entered the city, they went into the upstairs room {in the house} where they were staying. Those who were there included Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew. They also included another man named James, who was the son of Alphaeus; Simon the Zealot; and Judas, who was the son of yet another man named James. 14 All these men prayed together regularly and frequently. Others who prayed with them included the women who had traveled with Jesus; Mary, who was Jesus' mother; and his younger brothers.

15 Now about 120 people were meeting together at that place. At one of the meetings, Peter stood up among his fellow believers {because he was going to say something important}. He said, 16 "You who believe as I do, there are words that King David wrote in the Scriptures long ago that had to happen as he said they would. The Holy Spirit, who knew that Judas would show Jesus' enemies where to find him and arrest him, inspired David to write those words. 17 But Jesus had chosen Judas, along with the rest of us, to represent him. {So we need to find someone else to take his place.}"

18 This is how Judas died. The Jewish leaders gave Judas money for betraying Jesus. He used that money to buy a field{and he went to that field to kill himself because he felt so badly about what he had done to Jesus}. As he killed himself, his body landed with such force on that field that his abdomen burst open and all his intestines spilled out. 19 The news about this spread widely among the people of Jerusalem. When they heard about it, they gave that

field a new name. In their Aramaic language it was Akeldama, which means “Field of Blood.” {They gave it that name because it was where someone had died.}

20Peter also said, “What happened to Judas is like what we read in the book of Psalms: ‘May his home become empty, with no one living in it.’ These other words in the Psalms also refer to him: ‘Let someone else take over his work as a leader.’”

21“So we need to identify all the men who were with us during the whole time when the Lord Jesus was with us. **22**{They need to have been with us} from the time when John the Baptizer began his work until the day when Jesus left us and rose up to heaven. One such man must {replace Judas and} join us in telling people about Jesus and how God caused him to live again after he died.”

23So the people who were meeting together suggested two men who could replace Judas. One man was Joseph the son of Sabbas, who also had the name Justus. The other man was Matthias. **24-25**Then they prayed: “Lord Jesus, Judas stopped representing you as he should have. He has now gone to the place where he deserves to be. You know what every person thinks privately. So please show us which of these two men you have chosen to take the place of Judas as your Representative.” **26**Then they cast lots to choose between the two of them. The lot indicated that Matthias was the one to replace Judas. So he became a Representative along with the 11 others.

Chapter 2

1On the day when the Jews were celebrating the Pentecost festival, the believers were all together in one place {in the city of Jerusalem}. **2**Suddenly, they heard a noise coming from the sky that sounded like a wind blowing loudly. Everyone in the entire house where they were sitting heard the noise. **3**Then they saw what looked like burning flames. These flames separated from one another and came to rest on each of the believers. **4**Then the Holy Spirit empowered all of the believers. They began to speak in languages they had never learned. The Spirit was making it possible for them to do that fluently.

5At that time many Jews were staying in Jerusalem {to celebrate the Pentecost festival}. They were Jewish people who sincerely worshiped God. They had come from many different countries around the world. **6**When they heard this loud noise, a large crowd {of these Jews} gathered {at the place where the believers were}. The people in the crowd were amazed because they were each hearing the believers speak in their own languages. **7**They were all completely amazed, and they said to each other, “Listen, all these people who are speaking have come from Galilee. {So they cannot possibly know our languages!} **8**But all of us hear them speaking our own native languages! **9**Some of us are people from the regions of Parthia and Media and Elam. Others of us are from the regions of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia. **10**There are some people here from the regions of Phrygia and Pamphylia, from the country of Egypt, and from the regions in Libya that are near the city of Cyrene. There are others of us who are here visiting Jerusalem from Rome. **11**They include native Jews as well as non-Jews who have chosen to believe and practice what Jews believe. And others of us are from the island of Crete and from the region of Arabia. And yet we can hear these people speaking in all our different languages about the mighty works that God has done!” **12**The people wondered {about what was happening} and did not know what to think {about it}. So they asked one another, “What is happening here?” **13**But some of them made fun of what they saw. They said, “{These people are talking like this because} they have drunk too much wine!”

14In response, Peter stood up with all the other Representatives and spoke loudly to the crowd of people. He said, “You Jewish people and all of you others who live here in Jerusalem, listen to me and I will explain to you what is happening! **15**Some of you think that we are drunk, but we are not drunk. It is only nine o’clock in the morning{, and people here never get drunk at this time of the day}! **16**Instead, what has happened to us is the {miraculous} thing that the prophet Joel wrote about {long ago}. He wrote: **17**

‘During the last days,’ God says, ‘I will give my Holy Spirit to all kinds of people. Your sons and daughters will tell people my messages. I will give visions to the young men, and I will give inspired dreams to the old men. **18**During

those days I will give my Holy Spirit to my servants, both men and women, so they can tell people my messages. **19**I
will cause things to happen in the sky that will make people marvel. I will cause things to happen on the earth that
will show that great events are going to take place. Here on the earth there will be blood, fire, and smoke
everywhere. **20**In the sky the sun will appear dark to people and the moon will appear red to them. Those things
will happen before the momentous time when I, the Lord God, come to judge everyone. **21**But even though I am
coming to judge and punish sin, I will save all those who repent and ask me to forgive their sins.'"

22{Peter continued speaking. He said,} "You Israelites, listen to me! When Jesus from Nazareth lived among you,
God proved to you that he had sent him by enabling him to do many amazing miracles. These showed that he was
from God. You yourselves know that this is true. **23**Even though you knew that, you urged people who do not obey
God's law to take action to kill Jesus. They did that by nailing him to a cross. However, God had already planned for
that to happen, and he knew what the results would be, so he allowed it. **24**Jesus died, but God caused him to
become alive again and no longer dead, because it was not possible for him to stay dead.

25Long ago King David wrote what the Messiah said:

'I knew that you, Lord God, would always be there to protect me. You are right beside me, so I will not be afraid of
those who want to harm me. **26**Because of that, I am happy, and I joyfully praise you, O God. And I am completely
confident {that you will cause me to become alive again after I die}. **27**I am confident because I know that you will
not make me remain in the place where the dead are. You will not even let my body waste away, because you have
chosen me for a special purpose. **28**You have shown me how to live again. You will make me very happy because
you will be with me {forever}.'"

29{Peter continued,} "You who are Jews like me, I can tell you confidently that our ancient ruler, King David, died
and that his subjects buried him. In fact, his body is still here now at the place where they buried him. **30**So we
know that King David was not talking about himself in this psalm. Instead, he was a prophet, and he knew that God
promised to him that one of his descendants would become king after him. **31**A long time ago, David knew what
God would do. He said that God would cause Jesus the Messiah to live again after he died. God would not allow
him to remain in a grave. God would not even let him be dead long enough for his body to begin to decompose.

32After this man Jesus had died, God made him alive again. All of us who are standing here before you can testify
to this. {We all saw him alive after he had died.} **33**So we are not babbling drunkenly. Instead, this is what has
happened. God has greatly honored Jesus by causing Jesus to rule where God himself is, in heaven. Jesus has
received the Holy Spirit from God his Father, just as God promised. And now Jesus has generously given us the Holy
Spirit, and God has confirmed that gift by doing this miracle that you are witnessing. **34**We know that David was not
speaking about himself, because David did not go up into heaven {as Jesus did}. Besides that, David himself said
this about the Messiah:

'The Lord God said to my Lord the Messiah, "I will honor you by giving you a position next to me **35**while I
completely defeat your enemies."'"

36{Peter ended by saying,} "So I want every Israelite to know definitely that God has made Jesus both Lord and
Messiah, this same Jesus whom you had nailed to a cross and killed."

37When the people heard what Peter said, they knew they had done wrong. The people asked him and the other
Representatives, "Can you men tell us what God wants us to do?"

38Peter answered them, "Each of you should turn away from your sinful behavior. If you now believe in what Jesus,
the Messiah, has done for you, we will baptize you, showing that God has forgiven your sins, and he will give you
his Holy Spirit. **39**You will receive the Holy Spirit because God has promised to give him to you and to your children
and to all others whom the God we worship leads to have faith in Jesus. That includes all those who live far away
from here." **40**Peter said many more things and spoke strongly to them. He told them, "Ask God to save you so that
he will not punish you when he punishes these evil people {who have rejected Jesus}!"

41So the people who believed Peter's message received baptism. There were about 3,000 of them who joined the group of believers that day. **42**They continually obeyed what the Representatives taught. They met many times together with the other believers, and they ate a meal and prayed together every day.

43Throughout Jerusalem people came to have a great awe for God, because the Representatives were doing many kinds of miraculous deeds. **44**All of those who believed in Jesus met regularly together. They also kept sharing what they had with one another. **45**From time to time some of them sold some of their land and some of the other things that they owned. They did this so that they could give some of the money they made to other believers. They gave those believers as much as they needed. **46**Every day they kept gathering to worship together in the temple courtyard, and then they would have meals together in their homes. They ate together happily and with genuine affection. **47**As they did so, they kept praising God, and the other people who lived in Jerusalem greatly respected them. {As those things were happening,} every day the Lord Jesus saved more people and those people joined with the other believers.

Chapter 3

1One day Peter and John were going to the temple to pray. It was three o'clock in the afternoon, the time when people prayed there. **2**There was a man there who had not been able to walk from the time he was born. He was sitting by the Beautiful Gate at the entrance to the temple area. People carried him there every day so that he could ask those who were going into the temple area to give him some money.

3As Peter and John were approaching that gate, he saw them and asked them to give him some money. **4**When they heard the man speak to them, Peter and John looked directly at him, and Peter said to him, "Look at us!" **5**So he looked directly at them, expecting to get some money from them. **6**Then Peter said to him, "I do not have any money, but I will do what I can do for you. I heal you by the power of Jesus the Messiah, that man who came from the city of Nazareth. So get up and walk!" **7**Then Peter grasped the man's right hand and helped him to stand up. The man realized immediately that his feet and ankles were going to be strong enough to support him. **8**So the man jumped {the rest of the way} up {by himself} and started walking! He went into the temple area with Peter and John, leaping for joy and praising God as he walked!

9All the people who were there saw him walking and heard him praising God. **10**They recognized that he was the man who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate that led into the temple area and ask people for money! So all the people there were greatly amazed that he could now walk. **11**The man would not let go of Peter and John. The three of them were in Solomon's Porch{, a covered walkway within the temple area}. As the amazing news of the man's healing spread through the crowd, more and more people came running over to see them.

12When Peter saw that a crowd was gathering around them, he said to the people, "You Israelites, it should not surprise you that this man can now walk. But you should not be looking at us as if we were so godly that we made him walk by our own power! **13**{Let me tell you what has really happened.} God made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We Israelites are descendants of those men, so the covenant includes us. God honored that covenant by sending Jesus to be the Messiah. {We told this man that the power of Jesus could heal him, and} God has now glorified Jesus by doing this miracle. But when Jesus was living among us, you turned him over to the Romans for trial. Pilate, the Roman governor, {knew that Jesus was innocent and} wanted to set him free. But you gathered in front of Pilate and shouted that he should not release him. **14**Rather than have Pilate release Jesus to you, even though Jesus was the Messiah, you rejected him and asked Pilate to set free a killer instead! **15**So you are responsible for the death of Jesus, the one who gives people life. But God brought him back to life after he died. We can testify that we saw Jesus many times after he became alive again. **16**You recognize this man whom you see standing here. {He is the man who used to beg for alms at the Beautiful Gate.} He is now strong enough to stand on his own because he believed in what Jesus could do. Yes, it is because he trusted in Jesus that he is now completely healthy. All of you saw this happen.

17Now, my countrymen, I know that you and your leaders killed Jesus because you did not know that he was the
Messiah. **18**God said through the prophets ahead of time that the Messiah he would send would suffer and die.
And now, by what has happened, he has fulfilled what the prophets said. **19**So stop living sinful lives and ask God to
help you do what pleases him. Then God will completely forgive you for sinning against him. **20**If you do that, there
will be times when you will know that the Lord God is helping you. And some day he will send back to earth the
Messiah whom he has given to you. That person is Jesus. **21**Jesus will certainly stay in heaven until the time when
God causes all that he created to become new. Long ago God promised to do that, and he chose holy prophets to
tell that to people. **22**For example, {the prophet} Moses said this {about the Messiah}: 'The Lord our God will make
one of you Israelites a prophet like me. You must do everything he tells you to do. **23**Those who do not do what that
prophet tells them will no longer belong to God's people. God will destroy them.'" **24**{Peter continued,} "In fact, all
the prophets have told about what would happen during the times we are now living in. Those prophets include
Samuel and the ones who lived after him, who all spoke about these events before they happened. **25**What the
prophets said long ago applies to you today. And the solemn agreement that God made to bless our ancestors also
extends to you, their descendants. He said to Abraham {about the Messiah}, 'I will bless all the people groups on
the earth as a result of what your descendant will do.' **26**So when God sent Jesus to the earth as the Messiah, he
had him come to you Israelites first. God intended for the Messiah to bless you by getting you to stop doing things
that were wrong."

Chapter 4

1While Peter and John were still speaking to the people, several men walked up and confronted them. They
included priests who served in the temple, the officer in charge of the temple guard, and some members of the
Sadducee group. **2**These men were very angry because these two men were teaching the people. They were telling
the people that what God did for Jesus shows that God causes people to live again after they die. **3**So these men
arrested Peter and John and put them in jail. They did this because it was already evening, and the Jewish council
would have to wait until the next day to question them. **4**However, many people who had heard Peter speak put
their faith in Jesus. The number of men who believed in Jesus increased to about 5,000.

5The next day the high priest called the other chief priests, the teachers of the Jewish laws, and the other members
of the Jewish council. They all assembled in one place in Jerusalem. **6**Annas, the former high priest, was there.
Caiaphas, the new high priest, was also there. And so were John and Alexander and other men who were related to
the high priest. **7**They commanded guards to bring Peter and John into the room, and then they asked Peter and
John, "Who gave you the right or the ability to do this?"

8As the Holy Spirit gave him power, Peter said to them in response, "You fellow Israelites who rule us and all of you
elders, listen to me! **9**Today you are questioning us about a good deed we did for a man who could not walk. You
want to know how he became able to walk. **10**So we want this whole council and all the other Israelites to know
what has happened. This man is able to stand before you because Jesus from Nazareth, the Messiah, healed him.
You were responsible for the Romans executing Jesus by nailing him to a cross. But God brought Jesus back to life
after they executed him.

11Jesus the Messiah of Nazareth is the one of whom the Scriptures say,

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

And you are those builders{, because you rejected Jesus}. **12**{So you should no longer reject him, because} only
Jesus can save us. For God has given us no other person in the world who can save us {from the guilt of our sins}!"

13The Jewish leaders recognized that Peter and John were not afraid of them. They also realized that these two men
were ordinary people who had not studied in schools. So the leaders were amazed. They knew that these men had

spent time with Jesus. **14**They also saw the man who had become able to walk again standing there with Peter and John. So they were not able to say anything to contradict them.

15The Jewish leaders told guards to take Peter, John, and this man outside of the room where they were meeting. After they did so, the leaders talked with each other {about Peter and John}. **16**They said, “There is nothing that we can do to punish these two men! The news of the amazing miracle that they have done has spread widely in Jerusalem. So we cannot tell people that it did not happen! **17**However, we must not allow any more people to hear what they have been teaching about this Jesus. So we must tell these men that we will punish them if they continue to tell other people about the one who they say gave them the power to heal this man.” **18**So the Jewish leaders told the guards to bring them into the room again. After the guards had done so, they told them both that they were completely forbidden to speak or teach about Jesus.

19But Peter and John told them in response, “In order to obey your command, we would have to disobey God{, who commanded us to tell everyone about Jesus}. We will let you decide whether you think God would want us to obey you instead of him. **20**But as for us, we cannot obey you. We will not stop telling people about what we saw Jesus do and what we heard him teach.”

21Then the Jewish leaders again told Peter and John not to disobey them. But then they let them go without punishing them. The leaders knew that throughout Jerusalem people were praising God for what had happened {to the man who could not walk, and they did not want to upset the people}. **22**The people were praising God because {this was a remarkable miracle}. The man whom Peter and John had healed by doing this miracle was over forty years old, {and he had never before walked in his life}.

23After Peter and John left the council, they met with the others who believed in Jesus and told them everything that the people on the ruling council had said to them. **24**When the others who believed in Jesus heard this, they prayed together aloud to God, “O Lord! You made the sky, the earth, the oceans, and everything in them. **25**Your Holy Spirit caused our ancestor, King David, who served you, to write these words:

‘Why did the people groups of the world become angry

and why did they plan uselessly {against God}?

26The kings in the world prepared to fight,

and the rulers joined with them

to oppose the Lord God and the one whom he had chosen to be the Messiah.’

27What David said is true! Both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with people who were Israelites and people who were not, joined together in this city of Jerusalem to oppose Jesus. They opposed him even though he had done nothing wrong and even though you, God, had sent him as the Messiah. **28**{But when they opposed Jesus,} they did no more than you allowed because it was what you had decided long ago would happen. **29**So now, Lord, listen to what they are saying about how they will punish us! Help us who serve you to speak about Jesus without being afraid at all! **30**Use your power to do great healings and many other miraculous deeds that will show the authority you have given to Jesus, your chosen Messiah!”

31When the believers had finished praying, the place where they were meeting started to shake. The Holy Spirit gave them all power to tell people about Jesus as God had commanded, and they did that with great courage.

32Those in the group of people who believed in Jesus were in complete agreement about what they believed and what they wanted. Not one of them said that he was the sole owner of anything. Instead, they shared what they had with one another. **33**The Representatives continued to preach powerfully that God had caused the Lord Jesus to live again after he died. And God was helping all the believers very much. **34**Here is one way God was helping them. No one among the believers was lacking anything. This was because other believers who owned fields or houses

would sell some of their property to help them. They would bring the proceeds from the sale [35]and they would give it to the Representatives, who would then give out the money to the believers who needed it.

[36]Now there was a man named Joseph who belonged to the tribe of Levi and who came from the island of Cyprus. The Representatives called him Barnabas. In the language of the Jews, that name means a person who always encourages others. [37]Barnabas sold a field that belonged to him, and he brought the money to the Representatives {for them to give to other believers}.

Chapter 5

[1]Now there was one of the believers whose name was Ananias. He was married, and his wife's name was Sapphira. They also sold some land. [2]He kept for himself some of the money he had received for the land. His wife knew that he had done that. Then he brought the rest of the money and gave it to the Representatives.

[3]Then Peter said, "Ananias, you have allowed Satan to control you so completely that you tried to deceive the Holy Spirit. You kept for yourself some of the money you received for selling the land. {You did not give us all of it.} [4]Before you sold that land, you truly owned it. And after you sold it, the money was still yours. So you should never have thought about doing such a wicked thing. You were not just trying to deceive people! No, you were trying to deceive God himself!" [5]When Ananias heard the things Peter told him, he immediately fell down dead. And everyone who learned {about Ananias' death} felt a great awe for God. [6]When Ananias died, some young men came forward, wrapped his body in a sheet, and carried it out and buried it.

[7]About three hours later, his wife came in. But she did not know that Peter confronted her husband about the lie they had told and that her husband had died as a result. [8]Then Peter showed her the money that Ananias had brought and asked her, "Tell me, is this the amount of money you two received for the land you sold?" She said, "Yes, that is what we received." [9]So Peter said to her, "You both did a terrible thing when you agreed to try to deceive the Holy Spirit! This is what will happen to you as a result. {God struck your husband dead as a punishment and} some young men are just coming back from burying him. God is also going to strike you dead, and they will take your body out and bury it as well." [10]Immediately Sapphira fell down dead right in front of Peter. Just then the young men came back in. When they saw that she had also died, they carried her body out and buried it next to her husband's body.

[11]All the believers in Jerusalem felt a great awe for God because of what had happened to Ananias and Sapphira. Everyone else who heard about these things also felt great awe for God.

[12]God was enabling the Representatives to do many amazing miracles {that showed the truth of what they were preaching} among the people. All the believers were meeting together regularly in the temple courtyard at the place called Solomon's Porch. [13]All of the other people who had not believed in Jesus were afraid to meet with the believers. However, those people continued to speak very highly of them. [14]Many more men and women started believing in the Lord Jesus, and they joined the group of believers. [15]Because the people were seeing such amazing miracles, they started bringing those who had various diseases right into the streets and placing them on stretchers and mattresses there. They were hoping that when Peter walked by his shadow might touch some of them, because if even that happened, God would heal them. [16]Large crowds of people were also coming from the towns near Jerusalem. They were bringing those who had various diseases and those whom evil spirits were tormenting, and God healed all of them.

[17]However, the high priest became very resentful {that such large crowds were coming to the Representatives}. Many priests who were members of the Sadducee group were also very resentful of them. They joined together with the high priest to work against them. [18]So they commanded the temple guards to arrest them and to put them in the public jail. [19]{The high priest and his allies kept them in jail overnight so that they could question them in the morning.} But that night an angel from the Lord God opened the jail doors and led all the Representatives outside. Then the angel told them, [20]"Go to the temple courtyard, stand there, and tell the people about the

eternal life that Jesus can give them. Do not leave anything out, even though the Sanhedrin has commanded you not to say certain things." **21**So when the Representatives heard what the angel said, they went to the temple courtyard and began to teach the people once more about Jesus. By then it was about dawn. Around that same time, the high priest and the other priests who were working with him gathered together in the Jewish council chamber. From there they summoned the other council members. Together they were all the leaders of Israel. Once the whole council was present, they sent guards to the jail to get the Representatives. **22**But when the guards arrived at the jail, they discovered that they were not there. So they returned to the council and told the members, **23**"We saw that the jail doors were very safely locked and that the guards were keeping watch in front of the doors. But when we opened the doors {and went in to get those men}, none of them were inside the jail." **24**When the chief priests and the officer in charge of the temple guards heard that, they were greatly confused. They wondered what the consequences would be.

25Then someone came and reported to them, "Listen to this! The men you put in jail have somehow gotten into the temple courtyard. And they are telling the people there about Jesus!" **26**So the officer in charge of the temple guards went to the temple courtyard with the officers. They brought the Representatives back {to the council room}. But they did not treat them roughly. They were afraid that if they did that, the people would try to kill them by throwing stones at them.

27After the captain and his officers had brought the Representatives to the council room, they commanded them to stand in front of the council members. Then the high priest questioned them intensely. **28**He said to them, "We ordered you very clearly not to teach people about that man Jesus! But you have disobeyed us, and you have taught people all over Jerusalem about him! Furthermore, you are trying to make it seem that we are the ones who are guilty of that man's death!" **29**But Peter, speaking for himself and the other Representatives, replied, "We have to obey what God commands us to do, not what you people tell us to do! **30**You are the ones who killed Jesus by nailing him to a cross! But God, whom our ancestors worshiped, caused Jesus to live again after he died. **31**God has honored Jesus more than he has honored anyone else. He has made him the one to save us and rule over us. He has enabled us Israelites to stop sinning and he has forgiven us for the sins we committed. **32**We tell people about these things that we saw happen to Jesus. The Holy Spirit, whom God has sent to us who obey him, is also confirming that these things are true." **33**When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they became so angry {with the Representatives} that they wanted to kill them.

34But there was a council member named Gamaliel. He was a member of the Pharisee group. He taught the Jewish laws, and the Jewish people respected him highly. He stood up in the council and told the guards to take the Representatives out of the room for a short time. **35**{After the guards had taken them out,} Gamaliel said to the other council members, "You leaders of the people of Israel, you must think carefully about what you are going to do to these men. **36**Some years ago a man named Theudas led a revolt against the government. He claimed that he was a great man, and about 400 men joined him. But the Romans captured and executed him, and all those who had joined him went back to where they came from. So this revolt did not succeed. **37**After that, during the time when the Romans were recording the names of people in order to tax them, a man named Judas from the region of Galilee rebelled. He convinced some people to rebel with him. But he too died, and all those who had joined him went off in different directions. **38**Based on these examples, let me offer some advice. Do not kill these men! Set them free! I say this because if the things that are happening now are just something that humans have planned, someone will stop them. They will fail. **39**But if God has commanded them to do these things, you will not be able to stop them. You may even discover that you are working against God!" The other members of the council accepted what Gamaliel said. **40**They told the temple guards to bring in the Representatives and beat them. {So the guards brought them into the council room and beat them.} Then the council members commanded them not to speak to people about Jesus any more, and they let them go.

41So they left the council chamber. As they did, they even rejoiced that God had honored them by allowing people to treat them badly because they were testifying to Jesus. **42**Every day after that, they went to the temple area and to various people's houses, and they continued teaching people and telling them that Jesus is the Messiah.

Chapter 6

1During that time, many more people were becoming believers. The Greek-speaking Jews began to complain about the Aramaic-speaking Jews because the widows among them were not receiving their fair share of food every day.

2So {after} Jesus' 12 representatives {had heard what they were saying, they} summoned all the other believers {in Jerusalem} to meet together. Then they said to them, "We would not be doing the right thing if we stopped telling people the message God told us to share about Jesus in order to distribute food to people! **3**So, fellow believers, carefully choose seven men from among you, men whom you know the Spirit of God directs and who are very wise. Then we will instruct them to do this work. **4**As for us, we will keep on using our time to pray and to proclaim the news about Jesus."

5All of the disciples liked their suggestion. So they chose Stephen, a man who strongly believed in God and whom the Holy Spirit controlled completely. They also chose Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, who was from the city of Antioch. Nicolas was a former Gentile who had converted to the Jewish religion. **6**The believers brought these seven men to the Representatives, who prayed for those men. As they prayed, they placed their hands on the men's heads to show that they approved of them to do that work.

7More and more people were hearing the news about Jesus. The number of people in Jerusalem who believed in Jesus was increasing greatly. Among them were very many Jewish priests. They put their trust in Jesus as the Messiah and so they began to live in the way he said they should.

8God was giving Stephen power to do many amazing miracles among the people {that showed that the message about Jesus was true}. **9**However, some people opposed Stephen. They were Jews who attended a synagogue that had the name Freedmen's Synagogue. Some other Jews also opposed Stephen. They were from the synagogues that people attended who were from the cities of Cyrene and Alexandria and from the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. They all began to argue with Stephen. **10**But they were not able to prove that what he said was wrong, because God's Spirit enabled him to speak very wisely.

11So they secretly persuaded some men to accuse Stephen falsely. Those men said, "We heard him say bad things about Moses and God." **12**They also made the other Jewish people angry at Stephen, including the elders and the teachers of the Jewish laws. They came up to Stephen, grabbed him, and took him to the Jewish council. **13**They also brought in some people who told lies about Stephen. They said, "This man keeps saying bad things about this holy temple and about the laws that Moses received from God. **14**What we mean is that we have heard him say that this Jesus from the town of Nazareth will destroy the temple here in Jerusalem and will tell us to obey different customs from the ones that Moses taught our ancestors."

15All the people in the council room stared at Stephen and saw that his face resembled the face of an angel.

Chapter 7

1Then the high priest asked Stephen, "Are the things that these people are saying about you true?" **2**Stephen replied, "Fellow Jews and respected leaders, please listen to me! The glorious God whom we worship appeared to our forefather Abraham while he was still living in the region of Mesopotamia, before he moved to the city of Haran. **3**God said to him, 'Leave this land where you and your relatives are living and go into the land to which I will direct you.' **4**So Abraham left that land, which was also called Chaldea, and he arrived in Haran and lived there. After his father died, God told him to move to this land where our people are now living.

5At that time God did not give Abraham any land to own here, not even a small plot of this land. But God promised that later he would give this land to him and his descendants, and that it would always belong to them. However, at that time Abraham did not have any children who would inherit it.

6Later God told Abraham, ‘Your descendants will go and live in a foreign country. They will live there for four
hundred years. During that time, the rulers will mistreat your descendants and force them to work as slaves. **7**But I
will punish the people who make them work as slaves,’ said God. ‘After that, your descendants will leave that land,
and they will come and worship me in this land.’

8Then God commanded that every male in Abraham’s household and all of his male descendants should be
circumcised to show that they all belonged to God. Later Abraham’s son, Isaac, was born, and when Isaac was eight
days old, Abraham circumcised him. Later Isaac had a son named Jacob. Jacob was the father of the 12 men whom
we Jews call the patriarchs, our forefathers.

9You know that Jacob’s older sons became jealous because their father favored their younger brother Joseph. So
they sold him to merchants who took him to Egypt, where he became a slave. But God took care of Joseph. **10**God
protected him whenever people caused him to suffer. He enabled Joseph to be wise, and he caused Pharaoh, the
king of Egypt, to think well of Joseph. So Pharaoh appointed him to rule over Egypt and to look after all of
Pharaoh’s property.

11{While Joseph was doing that work,} there was a time when there was very little food anywhere in Egypt and also
in Canaan. People were suffering badly. At that time Jacob and his sons in Canaan could not find enough food to
eat. **12**When Jacob heard a report that there was grain in Egypt that people could buy, he sent Joseph’s older
brothers there to buy grain. {They went and bought grain from Joseph, but they did not recognize him. Then they
returned home.} **13**When Joseph’s brothers went to Egypt again, they bought grain from Joseph once more. But this
time he told them who he was. And so Pharaoh found out that these men who had come from Canaan were
Joseph’s brothers. **14**Joseph sent his brothers back home to tell their father Jacob that Joseph wanted him and his
entire family to come to Egypt. At that time Jacob’s family consisted of 75 people. **15**So when Jacob heard that, he
and all his family went to live in Egypt. {Later on,} Jacob died there, and our other ancestors, his sons, also died
there. **16**Their descendants brought their bodies back to our land and buried them in the tomb that Abraham
bought from Hamor’s sons in the city of Shechem.

17Our ancestors had become very numerous by the time God was about to rescue them from Egypt. That is what
God had promised Abraham he would do. **18**Another king had begun to rule in Egypt. He did not know that Joseph
had greatly helped the people of Egypt {long before his own time}. **19**That king tried to get rid of our ancestors in
cruel ways. He oppressed them and caused them to suffer greatly. He even commanded them to abandon their
newborn babies outside their homes so that the babies would die.

20During that time Moses was born, and God saw that he was a very beautiful child. His parents secretly cared for
him in their house for three months. **21**Then they had to abandon him outside the house. But Pharaoh’s daughter
found him and cared for him as her own son. **22**The Egyptians taught Moses the many things that they had
learned. When he grew up, he spoke and did things powerfully.

23One day when Moses was about forty years old, he decided to see how his relatives, the people of Israel, were
doing. **24**He saw an Egyptian mistreating one of the Israelites. So he went over to help the Israelite man. He
avenged him by killing the Egyptian. **25**Moses expected that his fellow Israelites would understand that God had
sent him to free them from being slaves. But they did not understand. **26**The next day, Moses saw two of his fellow
Israelites fighting each other. He tried to make them stop by saying to them, ‘Now you two are both Israelites! You
must stop hurting each other!’ **27**But the man who was injuring the other man pushed Moses away. He said to him,
‘You have no authority over us! **28**You probably want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday!’ **29**When Moses
heard that, he fled from Egypt to the land of Midian. He lived there for some years. {He got married, and} he {and
his wife} had two sons.

30One day forty years later, the Lord God came to Moses in the form of an angel. This was in the desert near Mount
Sinai. He appeared in the flames of a bush that was on fire. **31**When Moses saw it, he was amazed because the bush
was not burning up. As he went over to look more closely, he heard the Lord God say to him, **32**‘I am the God whom
your ancestors worshiped. I am the God whom Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob worship.’ Moses was so afraid that he

began to shake. He was afraid to look at the bush any longer. **33**Then the Lord God said to him, ‘Take your sandals
off to show that you honor me. Because I am here, the place where you are standing is especially mine. **34**I have
seen clearly how the people of Egypt are continually causing my people to suffer. I have heard my people when
they groan because of it. So I am taking action to rescue them from Egypt. Now get ready, because I am going to
send you back to Egypt.’

35This Moses is the one who had tried to help our Israelite people. But they rejected him by saying, ‘You have no
authority over us!’ Moses is the one whom God himself sent to rule them and to free them from being slaves. He
did that with the help of the angel who spoke to him from the bush. **36**Moses is the one who led our ancestors out
from Egypt. He did many kinds of miracles in Egypt, at the Sea of Reeds, and during the forty years that the
Israelite people lived in the wilderness. **37**This Moses is the one who said to the Israelite people, ‘God will cause
another man from among your own people to be a prophet like me for you.’ **38**It was this man Moses who was
among the Israelites who were together in the wilderness. God spoke through the angel on Mount Sinai to give
Moses our laws. Moses was the one who told our ancestors what the angel had said. He was the one to whom God
gave commandments and who passed them on to us. Those commandments are still powerful today.

39However, our ancestors did not want to obey Moses. Instead, they rejected him as their leader and wanted to
return to Egypt. **40**So they told his older brother Aaron, ‘Make idols for us who will be our gods to lead us. As for
that fellow Moses who led us out of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him!’ **41**When the Israelites
rejected Moses, they made an image that looked like a calf. Then they offered sacrifices to honor that idol. They
sang and danced to worship something that they themselves had made. **42**So God stopped correcting them. He left
them to worship the stars in the sky. This agrees with what one of the prophets wrote:

God said, ‘You Israelite people repeatedly killed animals and offered them to me with grain as sacrifices during
those forty years that you were in the wilderness. But you certainly were not truly offering them to me!

43On the contrary, you carried with you the tent that contained the idol representing the god Molech that you
worshiped. You also carried with you the image of the star called Rephan. Those were idols that you had made, and
you worshiped them instead of me. So I will cause you to be taken away far from your homes to regions even
farther than the country of Babylon.’

44While our ancestors were in the desert, they worshiped God at the sacred tent that showed that he was there
with them. They had made the tent exactly like God had commanded Moses to make it. It was exactly like the
model that Moses had seen when he was up on the mountain. **45**Later on, other ancestors of ours carried that tent
with them when Joshua led them into this land. That was during the time when they took this land for themselves,
when God forced the people who previously lived here to leave. So the Israelites were able to possess this land. The
tent remained in this land and was still here when King David ruled. **46**David pleased God, and he asked God to let
him build a temple where he and all of our Israelite people could worship God. **47**But instead, God told David’s son
Solomon to build a temple where people could worship him.

48However, we know that God, who is greater than everything, does not live in temples that people build. It is as
the prophet Isaiah wrote:

49-50 God said, ‘I created everything in heaven and on earth. My presence fills all of creation. So you human beings
cannot make a place good enough for me to live in!’

51You people are disobedient to God, as if you did not even know God! You are exactly like your ancestors! You
always resist the Holy Spirit, just as they did! **52**Your ancestors caused every prophet to suffer. They even killed
those who long ago announced that the Messiah would come, the one who always did what pleased God. And the
Messiah has come! He is the one whom you recently turned over to his enemies and insisted that they kill him!
53You are the people who have received God’s laws. Those were laws that God caused angels to give to our
ancestors. However, you have not obeyed them!”

54When the Jewish council members and others there heard all that Stephen said, they became very angry. They were grinding their teeth together because they were so angry at him!

55But the Holy Spirit completely controlled Stephen. He looked up into heaven and saw a dazzling light from God, and he saw Jesus standing at God's right side. **56**"Look," he said, "I see right into heaven, and I see the Son of Man {in human form} standing where God rules!"

57{When the Jewish council members and others heard that,} they shouted loudly. They put their hands over their ears so that they would not hear him. All together they ran up to Stephen and grabbed him. **58**They dragged him outside the city of Jerusalem and started to throw stones at him to kill him. The people who were accusing him took off their outer garments in order to throw stones more easily. They put these garments on the ground next to a young man whose name was Saul so that he could guard them. **59**While they continued to throw stones at Stephen, Stephen prayed out loud, "Lord Jesus, welcome me when I die!"

60Then Stephen knelt down and cried out loud, "Lord, do not punish them for this sin!" After he had said this, he died.

Chapter 8

1-2 Then some men who honored God buried Stephen's body in a tomb, and they mourned loudly for him.

But Saul thought the Sanhedrin had done the right thing by stoning Stephen. On that same day, people {Saul was leading} started severely persecuting the believers who were living in Jerusalem. So most of the believers fled to other places throughout the provinces of Judea and Samaria. But the apostles remained in Jerusalem. **3**Saul began trying to destroy the group of believers. He entered their houses one by one. He dragged away men and women {who believed in Jesus}, and he put them in prison.

4The believers who had left Jerusalem went to different places, where they continued preaching the message about Jesus. **5**One of those believers, whose name was Philip, went from Jerusalem to a city in the district of Samaria. There he was telling the people that Jesus is the Messiah. **6**Many people there heard Philip speak and saw the miraculous things that he was doing. So they all paid close attention to what he was saying. **7**For example, Philip commanded evil spirits to come out of many people, and they came out screaming. Also, many people who could not move their muscles and many others who were lame were healed. **8**So many people in that city were very happy.

9There was a man in that city whose name was Simon. He had been practicing sorcery for a long time, and he amazed the people in the district of Samaria with his magic. He claimed he was "Simon the Great One!" **10**The people there, both ordinary and important people, listened to him. They were saying, "Simon is the Great Power of God." **11**They continued to listen to him carefully because for a long time he had astonished them by practicing sorcery. **12**But then they believed Philip's message of the good news about how God would rule the lives of people everywhere and about Jesus the Messiah. Philip baptized the men and the women who believed in Jesus. **13**Though the people had been worshiping him, Simon too believed Philip's message and received baptism. He began to accompany Philip constantly. He was continually amazed by the great miracles he saw Philip doing. These things showed that Philip was speaking the truth.

14When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that many people throughout Samaria district had believed God's message, they sent Peter and John there. **15**When Peter and John arrived in Samaria, they prayed for those new believers to receive the Holy Spirit. **16**For the Holy Spirit had not yet openly empowered any of them. They had only received baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus. **17**Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

18Simon saw that people received the Holy Spirit as a result of the apostles placing their hands on them. So he offered to give money to the apostles. **19**He said, "Enable me also to do what you are doing, so that if I place my

hands on someone, he will receive the Holy Spirit." [20]But Peter said to him, "May you and your money be destroyed, because you tried to get God's gift with money! [21]You cannot work with us in what we are doing, because you do not have the right attitude toward God! [22]So stop thinking wickedly like that! Plead with the Lord to forgive you for what you wanted to do, since he will forgive you if you ask sincerely. [23]You are in spiritual danger! I perceive that you are extremely jealous of us and that a continual desire to do evil is controlling you." [24]Then Simon answered, "Pray to the Lord that he will not do to me what you just said!"

[25]Peter and John then told the people there what they knew personally about the Lord Jesus. They shared the message of the Lord with them. Then they both returned to Jerusalem. Along the way, they declared the good news about Jesus to people living in many towns in the district of Samaria.

[26]While Peter and John were returning to Jerusalem, the Lord sent an angel to Philip. {Even though so many Samaritans were becoming believers in Jesus,} that angel told him, "Get ready and go south along the road that goes from Jerusalem to the city of Gaza." That road is in a desert area. [27]So Philip got ready and went along that road. On the road he met a man from the land of Ethiopia. The man was an important official of the queen of Ethiopia. In his language people called their queen the Kandake. He took care of all of her funds. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship God, [28]and he was returning home and was seated, riding in his carriage. As he was riding, he was reading aloud from what the prophet Isaiah had written.

[29]God's Spirit told Philip, "Go near to that carriage and keep walking close to it!" [30]So Philip ran over to the carriage. He heard the official reading what the prophet Isaiah had written. He asked the man, "Do you understand what you are reading?" [31]He answered Philip, "No, I cannot possibly understand it if there is no one to explain it to me." Then the man said to Philip, "Please come up and sit beside me." {So Philip got into the carriage.} [32]The part of the Scriptures that the official was reading was this: "People will lead him away to kill him as they lead a sheep to the place where they are going to kill it. He will be silent, as a lamb stands silently while someone cuts off its wool.

[33]People will humiliate him and condemn him unjustly. He will have no descendants because people will kill him before he can have children."

[34]The official asked Philip about what he was reading, "Tell me, who was the prophet writing about? Was he writing about himself, or about someone else?" [35]So Philip replied to him. He began with that Scripture passage, and he told him the good news about Jesus.

[36]While they were traveling along the road, they came to a place where there was some water. Then the official said to Philip, "Look, there is some water! I would like you to baptize me." [37][1] [Philip said, "If you believe in Jesus with complete sincerity, God will save you, and you may be baptized." The Ethiopian answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."] [38]So the official told the driver to stop the carriage. Then both Philip and the official went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. [39]When they came up out of the water, suddenly the Spirit of the Lord took Philip away. The official never saw Philip again. Even so, the official continued going very happily along the road.

[40]Philip then realized that the Spirit had miraculously taken him to the town of Azotus. While he traveled around in that region, he continued proclaiming the good news about Jesus in all the towns between the cities of Azotus and Caesarea. He was still proclaiming it when he finally arrived in Caesarea.

8:37 [1]

Chapter 9

[1]Meanwhile, Saul continued angrily threatening to kill those who believed in the Lord Jesus. He went to the high priest in Jerusalem [2]and requested him to write letters introducing Saul to the leaders of the Jewish synagogues in the city of Damascus. The letters would ask them to give Saul the authority to seize any man or woman who

followed the teachings of Jesus and take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. {There the Jewish leaders could judge and punish them. The high priest gave Saul the letters he asked for.}

3While Saul and those with him were traveling, they were approaching Damascus. Suddenly a brilliant light from heaven shone around Saul. **4**Immediately he fell onto the ground. Then he heard the voice of someone say to him, "Saul, Saul, stop trying to hurt me!" **5**Saul asked him, "Lord, who are you?" He replied, "I am Jesus, whom you are hurting. **6**Now stand up and go into the city of Damascus! Someone there will tell you what I want you to do." **7**The men who were traveling with Saul were so astonished that they could not say anything. They just stood there. This was because they heard someone speaking, but they did not see anyone. **8**Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes, he could not see anything. So the men with him took him by the hand and led him into Damascus. **9**For the next three days Saul could not see anything, and he did not eat or drink anything.

10In Damascus there was a man who believed in Jesus named Ananias. Jesus made him see a vision and in it he called to him, "Ananias!" Ananias replied, "Lord, I am listening." **11**Jesus told him, "Go to Straight Street, to the house that belongs to Judas. Ask someone there if you can talk to a man named Saul who is from the city of Tarsus. Saul is praying to me at this moment. **12**Saul has seen a vision in which a man named Ananias entered the house where he was staying and put his hands on him to restore his sight." **13**Ananias answered, "But Lord, many people have told me about this man! He has done many bad things to the people in Jerusalem who believe in you! **14**The chief priests have given him permission to come here to Damascus and take prisoner all those who believe in you!" **15**But Jesus told Ananias, "Go visit Saul! Do what I say, because I have chosen him to serve me. I want him to speak about me to non-Jewish people and their leaders and to the Israelite people. **16**I myself will tell him that he must often suffer in order to tell people about me." **17**So Ananias went, and after he found the house where Saul was, he entered it. Then, as soon as he met Saul, he put his hands on him, and he said, "Saul, you are already like a brother to me. Jesus himself commanded me to come to you. Jesus is the one who appeared to you while you were traveling along the road to Damascus. He sent me to you to restore your sight, and he wants the Holy Spirit to lead and empower you." **18**Instantly, what seemed like flakes fell from Saul's eyes, and he was able to see again. Then he got up and was baptized. **19**After Saul ate some food, he became strong again. Saul stayed with the other believers in Damascus for several days.

20Right away he began to preach about Jesus in the Jewish synagogues. He told the people there that Jesus is the Son of God. **21**The people who heard him preach were amazed. Some of them were saying, "We can hardly believe that this is the same man who persecuted the believers in Jerusalem! And he came here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests in Jerusalem!" **22**But God enabled Saul to preach to many people even more convincingly. He was proving from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah. The Jewish leaders in Damascus became angry {because they could not disprove what he said}.

23Some time later, the Jewish leaders there plotted to kill him. **24**Those Jewish leaders were continually watching the people passing through the city gates so that if they saw Saul there, they could kill him. However, someone told Saul what they planned to do. **25**So some of those whom he had led to believe in Jesus took him one night to the high stone wall that surrounded the city. They used ropes to lower him in a large basket through an opening in the wall. In this way he escaped from Damascus.

26When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to meet with the other believers there. However, almost all of them continued to be afraid of him. They were not convinced that he had become a believer. **27**But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He explained to the apostles how, while Saul was traveling along the road to Damascus, he had seen Jesus, who had spoken to him there. He also told them how Saul had preached boldly about Jesus to people in Damascus. **28**So Saul began to meet with the apostles and other believers throughout Jerusalem. He spoke boldly to the people there about Jesus.

29Saul was also speaking about Jesus with Jews who spoke Greek, and he was debating with them. {They could not answer his arguments,} so they were continually trying to think of a way to kill him. **30**But the other believers found out that the Jews who spoke Greek were planning to kill Saul. So some of them took him to the city of Caesarea. There they put him on a ship that was going to Tarsus, his hometown.

31Since no one was persecuting them anymore, the believers throughout the entire regions of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria were able to live peacefully. The Holy Spirit was strengthening them and encouraging them. They were honoring the Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit was leading many other people to become believers.

32{Those peaceful conditions allowed} Peter to travel throughout those regions. Once he went to the coastal plain to visit the believers who lived in the town of Lydda. **33**There he met a man whose name was Aeneas. Aeneas was not able to walk or stand, and so he had not been able to get up from his bed for eight years. **34**Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Messiah heals you! Get up and roll up your own mat!" Right away Aeneas stood up. **35**Most of the people who lived in Lydda and on the Plain of Sharon saw Aeneas after the Lord had healed him, so they believed in the Lord Jesus.

36In the town of Joppa there was a believer whose name was Tabitha. Her name in the Greek language was Dorcas. She was always doing good deeds for poor people by giving them things that they needed. **37**During the time that Peter was in Lydda, she became sick and died. Some women there washed her body {according to the Jewish custom}. Then they {covered her body with cloth and} placed it in an upstairs room in her house.

38Lydda was near the city of Joppa, so when the disciples heard that Peter was still in Lydda, they sent two men to go to Peter. When they arrived where Peter was, they urged him, "Please come immediately with us to Joppa!" **39**Peter got ready right away and went with them. When he arrived at the house in Joppa, they took him to the upstairs room where the body of Dorcas was lying. All the widows there stood around him. They were crying and showing him the tunics and other garments that Dorcas had made for people while she was still alive. **40**But Peter sent them all out of the room {so that he could pray}. Then he got down on his knees and prayed. Then, turning toward her body, he said, "Tabitha, stand up!" Immediately she opened her eyes and, when she saw Peter, she sat up. **41**He grasped one of her hands and helped her to stand up. After he had summoned the believers and especially the widows among them to come back in, he showed them that she was alive again. **42**Soon people everywhere in Joppa knew about that miracle and, as a result, many people believed in Jesus. **43**Peter stayed in Joppa many days with a man named Simon, who made leather from animal skins.

Chapter 10

1There was a man whose name was Cornelius who lived in the city of Caesarea. He was an officer who commanded 100 men in a large group of Roman soldiers from Italy. **2**He continually tried to do what would please God. He and his entire household were non-Jews who worshiped God. He often gave money to help poor Jewish people. He prayed to God regularly.

3One day at about three o'clock in the afternoon, Cornelius saw a vision. He clearly saw an angel whom God had sent. He saw the angel coming into his room and saying to him, "Cornelius!" **4**Cornelius stared at the angel and became terrified. Then he asked fearfully, "Sir, what do you want?" The angel answered him, "You have been praying regularly to God. You often give money to help poor people. Those things have been like an offering to God, and he has noticed them. **5**So now command some men to go to Joppa. Tell them to bring back a man named Simon whose other name is Peter. **6**He is staying with a man, also named Simon, who makes leather. His house is near the ocean." **7**When the angel who was speaking with Cornelius had gone, he summoned two of his household servants and a soldier who served him, one who also worshiped God. **8**He explained to them everything that the angel had said. Then he told them to go to the city of Joppa and ask Peter to come to Caesarea.

9About noon the next day, those three men were traveling along the road. As they were approaching Joppa, Peter went up on the flat housetop to pray. **10**Peter became hungry and wanted something to eat. While some people were preparing the food, he saw a vision. **11**He saw an opening in the sky through which something like a large, square piece of cloth was coming down. Someone seemed to be lowering it by its four corners to the ground. **12**Inside the sheet were many different kinds of creatures. Some had four feet, others crawled on the ground, and others were wild birds. These included animals and birds that the Mosaic laws forbade Jews to eat. **13**Then he heard

God say to him, “Go ahead, Peter, kill some of these and eat them.” **14**But Peter replied, “Lord, surely not! I have never eaten anything that our Jewish law says is unacceptable to you or that we must not eat!” **15**Then Peter heard God talk to him a second time. He said, “I am God, so if I have made something acceptable to eat, do not say that it is not acceptable to eat!” **16**This happened three times. Right after that, the sheet with the animals and birds went back up into the sky.

17This left Peter trying to understand what that vision meant. Meanwhile, the men Cornelius had sent arrived in Joppa. They asked people how to get to Simon’s house. When people told them, they found the house and stood outside the gate. **18**They called from the gate and asked if a man whose name was Simon, whose other name was Peter, was staying there. **19**While Peter was still trying to understand what the vision meant, the Holy Spirit said to him, “Listen! Three men are here who want you to go with them. **20**So do not be reluctant. Go downstairs and go with them! Do not think that you should not go with them, because I have sent them here!” **21**So Peter went down to the men and said to them, “Greetings! I am the man you are looking for. Why have you come?” **22**They replied, “Cornelius, who is a Roman army officer, sent us here. He is a good man who worships God. All of the Jewish people who know about him speak well of him. An angel from God told Cornelius, ‘Have some men to go to Joppa and get Simon Peter. Bring him to your house and listen to what he has to say.’” **23**So Peter invited them into the house and told them that they should stay there that night.

The next day Peter got ready and went with the men. Several of the believers from Joppa also went with him. **24**The day after that, they arrived in the city of Caesarea. Cornelius was waiting for them. He had also invited his relatives and close friends to come, so they were there in his house too. **25**When Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and bowed low in front of him to worship him. **26**But Peter grasped Cornelius by the hand and lifted him to his feet. He said, “Stand up! Do not bow down and worship me! I myself am only human, like you!”

27While he was talking to Cornelius, Peter {and the others} entered the house. They saw that Cornelius had invited many people to come {and hear Peter}. **28**Then Peter said to them, “You all know that we Jews think we are disobeying our laws if we associate with people who are not Jews or visit them in their homes. However, God has shown me {in a vision} that I should not say that God only accepts people who are Jews. **29**So when you sent some men to ask me to come here, I came right away without objection. So, please tell me, why have you asked me to come here?”

30Cornelius replied, “About this time three days ago, I was praying to God in my house, as I regularly do at three o’clock in the afternoon. Suddenly a man whose clothes shone brightly stood in front of me **31**and said, ‘Cornelius, God has heard your prayer. He has also noticed that you have often given money to help poor people, and he is pleased with that. **32**So now, send messengers to go to the city of Joppa in order to ask Simon, whose other name is Peter, to come here. He is staying near the ocean in a house that belongs to another man named Simon, who makes leather.’ **33**So I sent some men right away to ask you to come here. I certainly thank you for coming. Now we all are gathered here, knowing that God is with us. We want to hear all the things that the Lord God has commanded you to say. So please speak to us.”

34So Peter began to speak to them. He said, “Now I understand that it is true that God does not favor only certain groups of people. **35**Instead, from every people group he accepts everyone who honors him and who does what pleases him. **36**You know what God told us Israelites. He proclaimed to us the good news that people could live peacefully with him because of what Jesus the Messiah has done. This Jesus is not Lord only over us Israelites. He is also the Lord who rules over all people. **37**You know what Jesus did throughout the land of Judea, beginning in Galilee. He started to do those things after John proclaimed to people that they should stop their sinful behavior. If they did, John baptized them. **38**You know that God gave his Holy Spirit to Jesus, the man from the town of Nazareth, and gave him the power to do miracles. You also know how Jesus went to many places, doing good deeds. Whenever he met people whom the devil was causing to suffer, he healed them. It was God who enabled Jesus to do those things.”

39“We all saw the things Jesus did in Jerusalem and around every part of the land of Israel where he lived. His enemies killed him by nailing him to a wooden cross. **40**Jesus died on a Friday, but God brought him back to life that

Sunday. God made sure that many people would see that he was certainly alive again. 41At that time God did not
let everyone see him. God had previously chosen some people to be witnesses that Jesus was alive. I am one of the
people who saw him and even ate meals together with him just after God brought him back to life. 42Jesus
commanded us to preach to the people and tell them that God has chosen him to judge everyone one day. He will
judge those who are still alive and those who have died before that day. 43All the prophets who wrote about him
long ago told the people about him. They wrote that if anyone believed in him, God would forgive whatever sins
they had done, because of what this man, Jesus, would do for them."

44While Peter was still speaking about Jesus, suddenly the Holy Spirit came to all those people from other nations
who were listening to the message. 45The Jewish believers who had come with Peter from Joppa were amazed that
God had so kindly given the Holy Spirit to people from all different nations too. 46The Jewish believers knew that
God had done that because they were hearing those people speak in other languages to tell how great God is.
Then Peter said, 47{to the other Jewish believers who were there}, "God has given them the Holy Spirit just as he
gave him to us Jewish believers. Surely all of you would agree that we should baptize these people!" 48Then Peter
told Cornelius and his guests that they should receive baptism as believers in Jesus the Messiah. {Peter and the
believers who had come with him from Joppa baptized all of them.} After they had received baptism, Cornelius
invited Peter to stay with them for several days. {So he and the other Jewish believers did that.}

Chapter 11

1The apostles and other believers who lived in various towns in the province of Judea heard that some non-Jewish
people had also believed the message of God about Jesus. 2But there were some Jewish believers in Jerusalem who
{followed the teaching of the Pharisees and} believed that Jews should not associate with non-Jews. When Peter
came back from Caesarea to Jerusalem, they met with him and criticized him. 3They said to him, "Not only was it
wrong for you to go into the home of someone who was not Jewish, you even ate there!"

4So Peter told them exactly what had happened. 5He said, "I was praying {by myself} in the city of Joppa, and in a
trance I saw a vision. I saw something like a large sheet coming down from heaven, suspended by its four corners.
It came down to where I was. 6As I was gazing at it, I looked closely and I saw some tame animals and also some
wild animals, reptiles, and wild birds. 7Then I heard a voice commanding me, 'Go ahead, Peter, kill some and eat
them!' 8But I replied, 'Lord, surely not! I have never eaten anything that our laws say we must not eat!' 9The voice
spoke to me from heaven a second time: 'I am God, so if I have made something acceptable to eat, do not say it is
unacceptable.' 10This same thing happened two more times. Then the sheet with all those animals and birds went
back up into heaven.

11At that exact moment, three men arrived at the house where I was staying. Their master had sent them to bring
me to Caesarea. 12God's Spirit told me that I should not hesitate to go with them even though they were not Jews.
Six Jewish believers went with me to Caesarea. We went into the house of the man who had sent for me. 13He told
us that he had seen an angel standing in his house. The angel told him, 'Tell some men to go to Joppa and bring
back Simon whose other name is Peter. 14He will tell you how God will save you and everyone else in your house.'
15While I was speaking to them, the Holy Spirit suddenly came to them just as he came to us during the Pentecost
festival. 16Then I remembered what Jesus had said: 'John baptized you with water, but God will baptize you with the
Holy Spirit.' 17God gave us the Holy Spirit when we believed in the Lord Jesus as the Messiah. God gave those non-
Jews the same Holy Spirit. So I had to cooperate with what God was doing {and baptize them}."

18After those Jewish believers heard what Peter said, they stopped criticizing him. Instead, they praised God. They
said, "It is clear that God has accepted non-Jews so they too can have everlasting life if they turn from their sinful
behavior."

19After Stephen died, people started persecuting the other believers in Jerusalem. So many of them left and went
to other places. Some of them went to the land of Phoenicia. Some went to the island of Cyprus. Others went to the
city of Antioch in Syria. In those places. they told people the good news about Jesus. But most of them told only

other Jewish people. **20**But some of the believers were men from the island of Cyprus and from the city of Cyrene in north Africa. They went to Antioch and also spoke with non-Jewish people, telling them that Jesus is the Messiah. **21**The Lord God was powerfully enabling those believers to preach effectively. As a result, very many non-Jewish people believed their message and trusted in Jesus.

22The group of believers in Jerusalem learned that many people in Antioch were believing in Jesus. So they sent Barnabas to Antioch {to teach and encourage the new believers}. **23**When Barnabas got to Antioch, he recognized that God had acted kindly toward the people there. This made him very happy. He encouraged all of the new believers to continue to trust in the Lord Jesus completely. **24**Barnabas was a good man whom the Holy Spirit completely controlled. He trusted God completely. Because of what Barnabas did, many more people in Antioch believed in Jesus.

25Then Barnabas left Antioch and went to the city of Tarsus in the province of Cilicia to look for Saul. **26**After Barnabas found Saul, he brought him back to Antioch to help teach the believers there. Barnabas and Saul met regularly with the church there for a whole year. They taught large numbers of people about Jesus. The people of Antioch were the first people who called the disciples of Jesus “Christians.”

27During the time that Barnabas and Saul were in Antioch, some believers who were prophets came there from Jerusalem. **28**One of them whose name was Agabus stood up {in order to speak}. God’s Spirit enabled him to prophesy that there would soon be a severe shortage of food in many countries. (This shortage happened when Claudius was the Roman emperor.) **29**{When the believers there heard what Agabus said,} they decided that they would send money to help the believers who lived in Judea. Each of them decided to give as much money as he was able to give. **30**They sent the money with Barnabas and Saul to the leaders of the believers in Jerusalem.

Chapter 12

1About this same time, King Herod Agrippa sent soldiers to arrest some of the leaders of the group of believers in Jerusalem. The soldiers put them in prison. The king did that because he wanted to hurt the believers and their community. **2**He commanded a soldier to cut off the head of the apostle James, the older brother of the apostle John. So the soldier did that. **3**When Herod realized that he had pleased the leaders of the Jewish people, he commanded soldiers to arrest Peter too. This happened during the festival when the Jewish people ate bread without yeast. **4**After the soldiers arrested Peter, they put him in prison. Herod assigned four groups of soldiers to guard Peter. Each group had four soldiers. Herod wanted to bring Peter out of prison and judge him in front of the Jewish people after the Passover Festival was finished. {He then planned to execute Peter.}

5So for several days Peter stayed in prison. But the other believers in their group in Jerusalem were urgently praying to God, asking him to help Peter. **6**It was the night before Herod planned to bring Peter out of prison and have him executed publicly. Peter was sleeping in the prison between two soldiers. A soldier on one side of him had locked a chain onto Peter’s wrist and his own wrist. A soldier on the other side of Peter had done the same thing. Two more soldiers were guarding the prison doors. **7**Suddenly, an angel from the Lord God stood beside Peter. A bright light shone in his cell. {But Peter was still sleeping so soundly that} the angel poked him in the side to wake him up. The angel told him, “Get up quickly!” {While Peter was getting up,} the chains fell off from his wrists. {However, the soldiers were not aware of what was happening.} **8**Then the angel said to him, “Fasten your belt around you and tie your sandals onto your feet!” And Peter did what the angel told him to do. Then the angel told him, “Wrap your cloak around you and follow me!” **9**So Peter {put on his cloak and sandals and} followed the angel out of the prison cell. He had no idea that all this was really happening. He thought that he was dreaming. **10**Peter and the angel walked by the soldiers who were guarding the two doors, but the soldiers did not see them. Then they came to the iron gate that led into the city. The gate swung open for them, and Peter and the angel walked out of the prison. After they had walked some distance along one street, the angel suddenly disappeared. **11**Then Peter finally realized that this was not a vision, it was really happening. So he thought, “Now I know that the Lord God truly sent an angel to help me. He rescued me from what Herod planned to do to me and from all the things that the Jewish leaders expected would happen.”

12When Peter realized that God had rescued him, he went to Mary's house. She was the mother of John, whose other name was Mark. Many believers had assembled there, and they were praying that God would help Peter somehow. **13**When Peter knocked at the outer entrance, a servant girl whose name was Rhoda came to find out who was outside the door. **14**{When Peter responded,} she recognized his voice, but she was so happy and excited that she forgot to open the door! Instead, she ran back into the house. She told the other believers that Peter was standing outside the door. **15**But they said to her, "You must be crazy!" But she continued to say that it was really true. They kept responding, "{No, it cannot be Peter.} It is probably his angel." **16**But Peter kept knocking the whole time those inside were talking. So when some of them finally opened the door, they saw that it was Peter, and they could hardly believe it! **17**Peter waved his hand to get them to be quiet. Then he told them exactly how the Lord God had let him out of the prison. He also said, "Tell James, the leader of our group, and our other fellow believers what has happened." Then Peter left and went away somewhere else.

18The next morning the soldiers who had been guarding Peter {saw that he was gone}. They wondered what had happened to him, and they became terribly upset. **19**{Then Herod heard about it. So} he commanded soldiers to search for Peter, but they did not find him. Then Herod questioned the soldiers who had been guarding Peter. {But the soldiers had no good explanation for what had happened.} So Herod commanded them to be executed{, which was how the Romans punished guards whose prisoners escaped}. Afterwards, Herod went from the province of Judea to the city of Caesarea, where he stayed for some time.

20King Herod became very upset with the people who lived in the cities of Tyre and Sidon. {He stopped them from trading with the people he ruled.} But the people of Tyre and Sidon needed to buy food from those regions. So they sent representatives together to the city of Caesarea to meet with Herod. They persuaded Blastus, who was one of Herod's important officials, to tell Herod that they wanted to live peacefully with him. **21**On the day that Herod had planned to meet with the representatives of Tyre and Sidon{, he did some things to impress them}. He put on very expensive clothes and he sat on his royal throne. Then he formally addressed all the people who had gathered there. **22**Those who were listening to him shouted repeatedly, "King Herod speaks so well that he must be a god, not a man!" **23**Herod accepted the praise of the people instead of telling them they should praise God. So while the people were still praising Herod, the Lord God sent an angel to punish him. That angel punished him severely: Worms ate him and he died.

24The believers continued telling God's message to people in many places, and the number of people who believed in Jesus was continually increasing.

25Barnabas and Saul finished delivering the money to help the Jewish believers in the province of Judea. They returned to the city of Jerusalem. They brought John, whose other name was Mark, with them.

Chapter 13

1At that time in the group of believers in the city of Antioch there were prophets and teachers. They were: Barnabas; Simeon, whose other name was Niger; Lucius, who was from the city of Cyrene; Manaen, who had grown up with Herod Antipas when he was the ruler of Galilee; and Saul. **2**While the believers in Antioch were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit spoke to them. He said, "I want you to let Barnabas and Saul serve me in a particular way. I want you to send them on a special mission that I have chosen them to do." **3**So the believers fasted and prayed some more. Then they put their hands on Barnabas and Saul {to show that they approved of them going on this special mission}. Then they sent them off to do what the Holy Spirit had commanded.

4The Holy Spirit gave Barnabas and Saul instructions about where to go. So they went from Antioch to the city of Seleucia, which is by the sea. From there they went by ship to the city of Salamis on the island of Cyprus. **5**While they were in Salamis, they went to the Jewish meeting places. There they proclaimed the message God had told them to share about Jesus. John Mark went with them and was helping them.

6The three of them crossed from one side of the island to the other {and shared the gospel message in each town they passed through}. Eventually they came to the city of Paphos. There they met a sorcerer whose name was Bar Jesus. He was a Jew who falsely claimed to be a prophet. **7**He was often in the company of the governor of the island, Sergius Paulus, who was a sensible man. The governor sent someone to ask Barnabas and Saul to come to him because he wanted to hear what God had told them to say. **8**However, Bar Jesus, who also called himself Elymas, contradicted what Barnabas and Paul were saying. (The name Elymas means "the Sorcerer.") He kept trying to persuade the governor not to believe in Jesus. **9**Saul was using his Roman name, Paul, because he was visiting a Roman official. The Holy Spirit gave Paul boldness and insight. He looked steadily at the sorcerer. **10**Paul said, "You are constantly lying to people and doing things to deceive them! You are serving the devil! You try to stop everything that is good! You must stop trying to keep people from living in the way that God wants! **11**Right now the Lord God is going to punish you! You will become blind and you will not even be able to see the sun until God decides to let you see again." At once Elymas could no longer see clearly. Then he could not see at all. He wandered around, searching for someone to take him by the hand and lead him. **12**When Sergius Paulus saw what had happened to Elymas, he believed in Jesus. The truth and power of what Paul and Barnabas were teaching about Jesus amazed him.

13After that, Paul and the people with him traveled by sailboat from Paphos to the city of Perga in the province of Pamphylia. At Perga, John Mark left them and returned to his home in Jerusalem. **14**Then Paul and Barnabas traveled by land from Perga and arrived in the city of Antioch in the district of Pisidia {in the province of Galatia}. On the Sabbath, they entered the Jewish meeting place and sat down {as rabbis did}. **15**Someone read aloud from what Moses had written in the books of the Law. Next someone read from what the prophets had written. Then the leaders of the Jewish meeting place sent a message to Paul and Barnabas. They said, "Fellow Jews, if one of you wants to speak to the people here to encourage them, please speak to us now."

16So Paul stood up and motioned with his hand {so that the people would listen to him}. Then he said, "Fellow Israelites and you non-Jewish people who also worship God, please listen to me! **17**God, whom we Israelites worship, chose our ancestors to be his people. He caused them to become very numerous while they were foreigners living in Egypt. Then God did powerful things to lead them out of slavery there. **18**He put up with their disobedience for about forty years while they were in the wilderness. **19**He enabled the Israelites to conquer seven people groups who were then living in the region of Canaan. He gave their land to the Israelites to live in. **20**The Israelites spent about 450 years in Egypt and in the wilderness."

"After that, God chose people to serve as judges and as leaders to rule the Israelite people. The prophet Samuel was the last of these judges to rule them. **21**Then, while Samuel was still their leader, the people demanded that he choose a king to rule them. So God chose Saul, the son of Kish from the tribe of Benjamin, to be their king. He ruled them for 40 years. **22**After God had rejected Saul from being king, he chose David to be their king. God said about him, 'I have seen that David, son of Jesse, is exactly the kind of man who desires what I desire. He will do everything that I want him to do.'"

23"God brought one of David's descendants, Jesus, to us Israelite people to save us. This is what he had promised David and our other ancestors that he would do. **24**Before Jesus began his work, John the Baptizer preached to all of our Israelite people who came to him. He told them that they should turn away from their sinful behavior and ask God to forgive them. Then he would baptize them. **25**When John was about to finish the work that God gave him to do, he told the crowds, 'Do not think that I am the Messiah whom God promised to send, because I am not. But listen! The Messiah will soon come. He is so much greater than I am that I do not even deserve to be his slave and take the sandals off his feet.'"

26"My fellow Israelites who are descendants of Abraham and you non-Jewish people who also worship God, please listen! God has told all of us how he saves people. **27**The people living in Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus. They heard someone read from the writings of the prophets {in their synagogues} on every Sabbath day. {But they did not understand what the prophets were saying.} And so what the prophets predicted long ago came true when they condemned Jesus to death. **28**{Many people accused Jesus of doing wicked things.} They could not prove that he had done anything for which he deserved to die. But they still demanded that Pilate,

the governor, condemn him to death. **29**They did to Jesus all the things that the prophets had written long ago that people would do to him. {They killed Jesus by nailing him to a cross.} Then they took his body down from the cross and placed it in a tomb. **30**However, God brought him back to life after he was dead. **31**For many days he repeatedly appeared to his disciples who had come along with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. Those who saw him are telling the people about him now."

32"Right now we are proclaiming this good news to you. God made a promise to our Jewish ancestors. **33**God has kept that promise for us who are their descendants, and also for you who are not Jews, by making Jesus alive again. It is just like what David wrote in the second Psalm{, when God was speaking about sending his Son}:

'You are my Son;

today I have become your Father.'

34God has made the Messiah alive after he was dead, and God will never let him die again. God promised that to the Messiah when he said in the Scriptures,

'I will certainly help you, as I promised David that I would do.' **35**That is why, in another psalm, David also says:

'You, God, will not allow the body of your Messiah to decay.' **36**While David was living, he did what God wanted him to do. Then when he died his body was buried where his ancestors' bodies had been buried. Then David's body decayed. {So he could not have been speaking about himself in this psalm.} **37**But God made Jesus alive again after he died, and his body did not decay."

38"So, fellow Israelites and other friends, we want you to know that God is promising to forgive your sins as a result of what Jesus has done. You could not become right with God by obeying the laws that Moses wrote because there were many laws that you were not able to obey. **39**But now God declares that all people who believe in Jesus are no longer guilty of any of the things that they have done that have displeased him. **40**So then be careful that God does not judge you, as the prophets said that God would do! **41**{God said through the prophet Habakkuk,}

'You who ridicule me, you will certainly be amazed when you see what I am doing. Then you will be destroyed. You will be amazed because I will do something terrible to you while you are living. You would not believe that I would do that even if someone told you!'"

42After Paul finished speaking, and as he and Barnabas were going away, many of the people there asked them to return on the next Sabbath and speak to them about these things again. **43**When the meeting was over, many people became disciples of Jesus, as Paul and Barnabas had encouraged them to do. These people were both Jews and non-Jews who worshiped God. Paul and Barnabas continued talking to them. They urged them to continue to trust that God kindly forgives people's sins because of what Jesus did.

44On the next Sabbath day, most of the people in Antioch came to the Jewish meeting place to hear Paul and Barnabas speak about Jesus. **45**The leaders of the Jews saw the large crowds of people that were coming to hear Paul and Barnabas. This made them extremely jealous. So they began to contradict the things that Paul was saying. They also insulted him. **46**Then, speaking very boldly, Paul and Barnabas said to those Jewish leaders, "We had to speak the message from God about Jesus to you Jews first before we proclaim it to non-Jews, because God commanded us to do that. But you are rejecting God's message. By doing that, you have shown that you are not worthy of everlasting life. Therefore, we are leaving you, and now we will go to the non-Jewish people to tell them the message from God. **47**We are doing this because the Lord God has commanded us to do it. {He said in the Scriptures,} 'I have chosen you to reveal things about me to non-Jewish people that will be like a light to them. I have chosen you to tell people everywhere in the world the message that I want to save them.'"

48When the non-Jewish people heard those words, they rejoiced. They praised God for the message about Jesus. All of the non-Jewish people whom God had chosen for everlasting life put their trust in Jesus. **49**At that time, many of the believers traveled around throughout that region, spreading the message about the Lord Jesus everywhere they went.

50However, some leaders of the Jews talked to some important women who worshiped with them. They also talked to the most important men in the city. The Jewish leaders persuaded the non-Jewish city leaders to try to stop Paul and Barnabas. So those non-Jewish people led many citizens against Paul and Barnabas, and they made them leave their region. **51**As the two apostles were leaving, they shook the dust off their feet. This was to show those leaders that God had rejected them and would punish them. Then they left the city of Antioch and went to the city of Iconium. **52**Meanwhile, the people in Antioch who had believed in Jesus were very happy and the Holy Spirit was helping them greatly.

Chapter 14

1At Iconium, Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish meeting place. There they spoke very powerfully about the Lord Jesus. As a result, very many Jews and non-Jews believed in Jesus. **2**But some of the Jews refused to believe that message. They made some of the non-Jews angry and bitter toward the people who had put their trust in Jesus. **3**But Paul and Barnabas spent a long time there speaking boldly about Jesus. Jesus enabled them to do many miracles. In this way, he showed people the truth of the message that God saves us even though we do not deserve it.

4The people who lived in Iconium had two different opinions. Some agreed with the Jews. Others agreed with Paul and Barnabas. **5**Then the non-Jewish people and the Jews who opposed Paul and Barnabas talked among themselves about how they could mistreat Paul and Barnabas. Some of the important men in that city agreed to help them. Together, they decided that they would kill Paul and Barnabas by throwing stones at them. **6**But Paul and Barnabas heard about their plan. They quickly went away to the district of Lycaonia. They went to the cities of Lystra and Derbe in that district and to the surrounding area. **7**While they were in that area, they continually told the people the good news about Jesus.

8In Lystra, they saw a man who was sitting down because he was crippled in his legs. When his mother gave birth to him, he had crippled legs, so he had never been able to walk. **9**He listened as Paul was speaking about Jesus. Paul looked directly at him and could see in the man's face that he believed that Jesus could make him well. **10**So Paul shouted out to him, "Stand up straight!" When the man heard that, his legs became strong. He immediately jumped up and began to walk around.

11When the crowd saw Paul heal the crippled man, {this made them think that Paul and Barnabas were the gods that they worshiped. So} they shouted excitedly in their own Lycaonian language, "Look! The gods have made themselves look like people and they have come down from the sky to help us!" **12**They began to say that Barnabas was probably the chief god, whose name was Zeus. And they began to say that Paul was Hermes, the messenger for the other gods. They believed this because Paul was the one who had been speaking. **13**People worshiped Zeus at a temple just outside the gates of the city. The priest who was there heard what Paul and Barnabas had done, so he came to the city gate, where many people had already gathered. He brought bulls with wreaths of flowers around their necks. The priest and the crowd of people wanted to kill the bulls as part of a ceremony to worship Paul and Barnabas. **14**But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard about that, they were very upset. They tore their own clothes {to show that they did not want the people to sacrifice to them}. They rushed among the people, shouting, **15**"People of Lystra, you must not kill those bulls to worship us! We are not gods! We are human beings who are just the same as you! We have come to tell you some good news about the one true God. You can stop worshiping other so-called gods, because they cannot help you. This true God made the sky, the land, the oceans, and everything that lives in them. **16**In the past, God allowed the non-Jewish people groups to worship whatever gods they wanted to worship. **17**Even so, God showed you non-Jewish people that he is a good God. He sent rain to make your crops grow. He gave you plenty of food so that you could enjoy your lives." **18**Paul and Barnabas said all these things to the people. Even so, it was very difficult for them to keep the people from sacrificing those bulls to worship them.

19Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and convinced many of the people of Lystra that Paul had not been telling them the truth. {The people who believed what those Jews said became angry with Paul.} They let

those Jews throw stones at him until he fell to the ground. They all thought that he was dead, so they dragged him outside the city and left him lying there. **20**But some of the believers in Lystra came and stood around Paul, where he was lying on the ground. Suddenly Paul stood up! He went back into the city with the believers.

The next day, Paul and Barnabas left the city of Lystra and traveled to the city of Derbe. **21**In the city of Derbe they spent several days telling the people about Jesus. Many people there became believers. After that, Paul and Barnabas started on their way back home. They went again to Lystra. Then they went from there to Iconium. Then they went to the city of Antioch in the province of Pisidia. **22**In each place, they urged the believers to keep trusting Jesus. They told the believers, “We suffer many hardships in this world when we are allowing God to rule over us.” **23**Paul and Barnabas chose leaders for each congregation. Before they left each place, they gathered the believers together and spent some time praying and fasting. Then they entrusted the leaders and other believers to Jesus, in whom they had believed, in order that he would care for them.

24After Paul and Barnabas had traveled through the district of Pisidia, they went south to the district of Pamphylia. **25**In that district, they arrived at the town of Perga. They preached God’s message about Jesus to the people there. Then they went down to the seacoast at the town of Attalia. **26**There they got on a ship and went back to the city of Antioch in the province of Syria. The people there had chosen Paul and Barnabas to go to other places and preach. That was where the believers had asked God to help Paul and Barnabas do the work that they had now completed. **27**When they arrived in the city of Antioch, they called the believers together. Then Paul and Barnabas told them all that God had helped them to do. Specifically, they told them how God had enabled many non-Jewish people to believe in Jesus. **28**Then Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch with the other believers for a long time.

Chapter 15

1But then some Jewish believers from the province of Judea arrived in Antioch. They started telling the non-Jewish believers there, “You must receive circumcision {to show that you belong to God}, as Moses commanded in the laws that he received from God. If you do not do that, God will not save you.” **2**Paul and Barnabas had a big argument with those Jews. {They could not settle their disagreement,} so the believers at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas and some of the other believers to Jerusalem. That way they could discuss this issue with the apostles and other leaders there.

3After the believers in Antioch had sent Paul, Barnabas, and the others on their way, they traveled through the provinces of Phoenicia and Samaria. When they stopped at different places along the way, they told the believers in those places that many non-Jews were putting their trust in Jesus. When the believers heard this, they rejoiced greatly. **4**When Paul, Barnabas, and the others arrived in Jerusalem, the apostles, elders, and other believers there welcomed them. Then Paul and Barnabas reported the things that God had enabled them to do {among non-Jewish people}.

5But some of the Jewish believers who were Pharisees stood up {to get the attention of the other believers}. They said to them, “The non-Jews who have believed in Jesus must receive circumcision. We must also tell them to obey the laws that God gave to Moses.”

6Then the apostles and the elders met together in order to talk about this issue. **7**After they had discussed it for a long time, Peter stood up {to get everyone’s attention}. He said to them, “Fellow believers, you all know that a long time ago God chose me from among you {other apostles} for an important task. He wanted me to tell the non-Jewish people the good news about Jesus. God wanted them to believe in him. **8**God knows what every person is truly like. He showed me and others that he had accepted the non-Jews as his people. He did that by giving the Holy Spirit to them just as {he gave the Holy Spirit} to us. **9**God treated them in the same way that he treated us. He forgave their sins because they trusted in Jesus. **10**Listen carefully! God has shown what he wants, so you should not be trying to promote something else. You should not be trying to force non-Jewish believers to obey our Jewish laws! That would be like putting a heavy burden on them. Our ancestors were not able to obey those laws. We Jews today have not been able to obey them either. **11**We are confident that God saves us Jews from our sins because of

what the Lord Jesus did for us. And we are confident that God will save in the same way those non-Jews who believe in Jesus."

12After Peter had spoken, Barnabas and Paul told about the many great miracles that God had enabled them to do among the non-Jewish people. {The miracles showed that God had accepted these non-Jews.} The people who heard Barnabas and Paul tell about these miracles were so fascinated that all they did was listen. None of them said anything.

13When Barnabas and Paul had finished speaking, James, the leader of the group of believers in Jerusalem, spoke to everyone. He said, "Fellow believers, listen to me. **14**Simon Peter has told you how God previously showed that he cared about the non-Jews. God did that by choosing from among them a group of people who would belong to him. **15**What God said long ago, as we can read in the writings of one of the prophets, agrees with that:

16Later on, I will help the Israelites again. I will restore the kingdom of David that has been conquered and destroyed. {I will do that by making one of the descendants of David the king of Israel again.} It will be as if I was rebuilding a house after it had been torn down.

17I will do this so that the rest of the people in the world will want me to be their Lord. This will include even the non-Jewish people whom I have chosen to belong to me. You can be certain that this will happen because I, the Lord God, have said that I will do it.

18I told my people long ago that I would do this."

19James continued to speak. He said, "Therefore I think that we should not tell the non-Jewish people who are becoming disciples of Jesus that they have to obey all of our Jewish laws and rituals. **20**Instead, we should write a letter to them about only a few things. They should not eat meat that people have offered to idols. They should not have sexual relations with someone to whom they are not married. They should not eat meat from animals that people have strangled to kill them for butchering. They should not eat or drink any blood. **21**{We should tell the Gentiles not to do these things because they would be very offensive to Jews. The laws that Moses wrote forbid these things. Jews would expect Gentiles to know that God would not want them to do these things because} people read those laws aloud in the Jewish meeting places on every Sabbath day. They have done this in cities in many different places for a very long time."

22The apostles and the elders, along with all the other believers in Jerusalem, agreed with what James said. So they decided that they should choose men from the church in Jerusalem and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. Those men would let the believers there know what the leaders at Jerusalem had decided. So they chose Judas the son of Sabbas and Silas. These were both leaders of the believers at Jerusalem. **23**They wrote the following letter, which they asked Judas and Silas to take to the believers at Antioch:

"We apostles and elders who are your fellow believers send our greetings to you. We are writing this to you non-Jewish believers who live in the city of Antioch and other places in the provinces of Syria and Cilicia.

24We have heard that some men from our church came to you and taught you things that were different from what you learned when you first believed in Jesus. We have heard that what they told you made you upset. We want you to know that we did not send these men to you.

25We met together and we all agreed that it would be good to choose some men and ask them to go to you. We are sending them along with Barnabas and Paul, whom we love very much.

26Those two have put their lives in danger because they serve our Lord Jesus the Messiah.

27We have also sent Judas and Silas to you. They will tell you the same things that we are writing.

28We believe that the Holy Spirit has shown us that we should not require you to obey all of the Jewish laws. That would be difficult and unnecessary. Instead, we only require you to obey the following instructions:

29You should not eat food that people have sacrificed to idols.

You should not eat or drink any blood.

You should not eat meat from animals that people have killed by strangling them.

You should not have sexual relations with someone to whom you are not married.

If you avoid doing these things, you will be doing what is right. We wish you well."

30Then the apostles and elders sent Barnabas, Paul, Judas, and Silas on their way. They traveled from the city of Jerusalem to the city of Antioch. They assembled the believers there and read the letter to them. **31**When the believers there read the letter, they were glad, because its message encouraged them. **32**Judas and Silas were prophets. They said many things to encourage the Gentile believers. They helped them to trust in Jesus even more.

33Judas and Silas stayed in Antioch for a long time. Then, when they were ready to return to Jerusalem, the believers at Antioch wished them well and they left. **34***[1]* [But Silas thought it would be best for them to stay there. So Judas went back to Jerusalem alone.] **35**However, Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch. There they and many others taught the believers and shared the good news about Jesus.

36After a while Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the believers in every city where we previously proclaimed the good news about Jesus. That way we can find out how well they are continuing to believe in and obey Jesus." **37**{Barnabas agreed that it would be good to go back and visit these believers.} But Barnabas said that he wanted to take John, whose other name was Mark, along with them again. **38**However, Paul told Barnabas that he thought it was a bad idea to take Mark with them. Paul said this because Mark had left them when they were previously in the region of Pamphylia. Mark had not continued to work with them. **39**Paul and Barnabas strongly disagreed with each other about whether they should bring John Mark with them. So they separated from each other. Barnabas went on a journey of his own and took Mark with him. They sailed on a ship to the island of Cyprus. **40**Paul decided to travel with Silas. The believers in Antioch asked God graciously to help them. Then Paul and Silas departed from Antioch. **41**Paul traveled {with Silas} through the provinces of Syria and Cilicia. In those places, they helped the groups of believers to trust in Jesus even more.

15:34 *[1]*

Chapter 16

1Paul and Silas went to the cities of Derbe and Lystra and visited the believers there. Now a believer whose name was Timothy lived in Lystra. His mother was a Jewish woman who believed in Jesus. His father, however, was a Greek man. {Because this man was not Jewish, he did not observe the law of Moses}. **2**The believers in Lystra and Iconium said good things about Timothy. **3**Paul wanted to take Timothy with him when he went to other places, so he arranged for someone to circumcise Timothy. Paul did that so that the Jews who lived in those other places would accept Timothy. Those Jews knew that Timothy's non-Jewish father would not have circumcised him.

4So Timothy went with Paul and Silas, and they traveled to many other towns. In each town they encouraged the believers to do what the apostles and elders in Jerusalem had told them to do.

5They helped the believers in those towns to trust Jesus even more. More people became believers every day.

6Paul and his companions wanted to share the good news about Jesus in the province of Asia. But the Holy Spirit showed them that he did not want them to do that. So they went instead through the regions of Phrygia and Galatia{, trying to discover where the Holy Spirit wanted them to share the good news}. **7**They arrived at the border of the province of Mysia. From there they wanted to go north into the province of Bithynia. But once again the Holy Spirit showed them that he did not want them to share the good news there. **8**So they went through the province of Mysia and arrived at Troas{, a city by the sea}. **9**That night God gave Paul a vision in which he saw a man from

the province of Macedonia. That man was begging Paul, “Come across the sea to Macedonia and help us!” **10**{I, Luke, joined Paul and his companions in Troas.} After Paul saw that vision, we made arrangements right away to travel to Macedonia. We were certain that God had called us to share the good news about Jesus with the people there.

11We got on a boat and sailed from Troas right to the island of Samothrace. The next day we sailed to the city of Neapolis. **12**Then we left Neapolis and went to Philippi. It was a very important city in the province of Macedonia. Many Roman citizens lived there. We decided to stay in Philippi for a while.

13On the Sabbath day we went outside the city gate and walked down to the river. {Since there was no synagogue in the city,} we knew that Jewish people would gather to pray at a place like that. When we arrived, we saw some women who had gathered to pray. So we sat down and began to tell them about Jesus. **14**A woman whose name was Lydia was one of the women who was listening to Paul. She was from the city of Thyatira, She was a merchant who sold luxurious purple cloth. She believed in the God of Israel and worshiped him. The Lord God enabled her to understand what Paul was saying{, and she trusted in Jesus}. **15**Paul baptized Lydia and the others who lived in her house. Then she said to us, “If you recognize that I believe sincerely in Jesus, please come to my house and stay there.” So we accepted her invitation and stayed at her house.

16Another day, as we were going to the place where people gathered to pray, we met a young woman who was a slave. An evil spirit was giving her the power to tell what would happen to people in the future. People paid a lot of money to the men who were her owners so that she would tell them what was going to happen to them. **17**This young woman followed Paul and the rest of us everywhere we went. She was continually shouting, “These men serve the God who is the greatest of all gods! They are telling you how God can save you!” **18**She continued to do this for many days. Finally, Paul became so upset that he turned toward the young woman and spoke to the evil spirit that was in her. He said, “In the name of Jesus the Messiah, I command you to come out of her!” Immediately the evil spirit left her. **19**Then her owners realized that she could no longer predict what would happen to people. That meant she could no longer earn money for them. That made them very angry. They grabbed Paul and Silas and took them to the open area of the city where its rulers were {so that the rulers could judge them}. **20**The owners of the young woman brought them to the city rulers. They told them, “These men are Jews, and they are greatly troubling the people in our city. **21**They are teaching that we should do things that our Roman laws do not allow us to do!” **22**Many people in the crowd joined those who were accusing Paul and Silas. {This convinced the Roman rulers that they must be bad men.} So the rulers told soldiers to tear the shirts off Paul and Silas and beat them with wooden rods. **23**So the soldiers beat Paul and Silas badly with rods. After that, they took them and put them into the prison. They told the jailer to make sure they did not get out. **24**Because the officials had told him to do that, the jailer put Paul and Silas into the room that was farthest inside the prison. There he made them sit down on the floor and stretch out their legs. Then he fastened their ankles in holes between two large pieces of wood so that Paul and Silas could not move their legs.

25About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and praising God by singing songs. The other prisoners were listening to them. **26**Suddenly there was a very strong earthquake that shook the whole jail. As soon as the earthquake struck, it caused all of the doors of the jail to open and all of the chains that fastened the prisoners to fall off. **27**The jailer woke up and saw that the earthquake had opened the doors of the jail. He thought that the prisoners had left the jail. So he pulled out his sword to kill himself{, because he knew that the city rulers would kill him if the prisoners had escaped}. **28**Paul saw the jailer and shouted to him, “Do not kill yourself! We prisoners are all here!” **29**The jailer shouted to someone to bring torches. {It was midnight and dark, and he wanted to be sure that all the prisoners were still in the prison}. He hurried in {to the inner cell where he had put Paul and Silas}. The jailer was shaking with fear{, because the rulers had told him to guard them carefully. When he saw that Paul and Silas were still there,} he knelt down in front of them to honor them {for sparing his life by not escaping}. **30**Then he brought Paul and Silas out of the jail. He asked them, “Sirs, I want God to save me. What do I need to do?” **31**They answered, “If you put your trust in Jesus as your Lord, God will save you. God will also save everyone in your family if they trust in Jesus.”

32Then Paul and Silas spoke about Jesus to him and everyone in his family. **33**The jailer washed their wounds, even
though it was the middle of the night. Then right away Paul and Silas baptized him and everyone in his family.
34Then the jailer brought Paul and Silas into his house and gave them some food to eat. He and his whole family
were all very happy because they had believed in God.

35The next morning, the city rulers told some officers to go to the prison and tell the jailer, “Let those two prisoners
go now!” **36**When the jailer heard this, he went and told Paul, “The city rulers have told me to let you go. So you two
can leave the prison now. Do not worry, no one will arrest you again.” **37**But Paul said to the jailer, with the officers
listening, “The city rulers had their soldiers beat us in front of a crowd. Without convicting us of any crime, they put
us in prison. They did those things to us even though we are Roman citizens. And now they want to send us away
without telling anyone! We will not accept that! Those city rulers must come themselves and free us from prison.”
38So the officers went and told the city rulers that Paul and Silas were refusing to leave the prison unless the rulers
came and released them personally. When the city rulers learned that they were Roman citizens, they became very
afraid. {They knew that they had done the wrong thing by beating Roman citizens and putting them in prison
without a trial.} **39**So the city rulers came to Paul and Silas and told them that they were sorry for what they had
done to them. The city rulers brought them out of the prison and asked them to leave the city. **40**After Paul and
Silas left the prison, they went to Lydia’s house. There they met with her and the other believers. They encouraged
the believers to continue trusting in the Lord Jesus. Then Paul, Silas, and Timothy left the city of Philippi. {I, Luke,
remained there for some time.}

Chapter 17

1Paul, Silas, and Timothy traveled through the cities of Amphipolis and Apollonia. Then they came to the city of
Thessalonica. There was a Jewish meeting place there. **2**On the Sabbath day, Paul went to the meeting place as he
usually did. For three weeks he went there on each Sabbath day. He proved to the people from the Scriptures {that
Jesus was the Messiah}. **3**Paul showed very clearly that in the Scriptures the prophets wrote that the Messiah would
have to die but then become alive again. He said, “I am telling you about Jesus. This man is the Messiah.” **4**Some of
the Jews in the synagogue believed what Paul said about Jesus. They began to meet with Paul and Silas. Many non-
Jewish people who worshiped God and many influential women also believed the message about Jesus. They too
began to meet with Paul and Silas.

5But some leaders of the Jews became jealous {because so many people were believing what Paul taught}. So they
went to the open area of the city and found some bad men to help them. They used those men to gather a crowd
and cause a great disturbance in the city. The crowd ran to the house of a man named Jason, where they thought
Paul and Silas were staying. They wanted to bring Paul and Silas outside to where the crowd of people was. **6**They
discovered that Paul and Silas were not at the house. However, they found Jason and dragged him and some of the
other believers who were with him to where the city rulers were. They told the rulers, “These men who have been
disturbing the way that people live have now come here also, **7**and this man Jason has invited them to stay at his
house. These other men whom we have brought to you are also friendly with them. They are all disloyal to Caesar
our king. They say that another person, whose name is Jesus, is the real king!” **8**When the city rulers and the crowd
of people that had gathered heard that, they became very upset. **9**The city rulers made Jason and the other
believers pay a fine. {But they told them that they would give the money back to them if Paul and Silas did not
cause any more trouble.} Then the city rulers let Jason and the other believers go.

10So that same night, the believers sent Paul and Silas out of Thessalonica to the town of Berea. When Paul and
Silas arrived there, they went to the Jewish meeting place. **11**Most of the Jews in Thessalonica had not been willing
to listen to God’s message. But the Jews who lived in Berea were very willing to listen. They listened carefully to the
message about Jesus. Every day they read the Scriptures for themselves to find out whether what Paul said about
Jesus was true. **12**Because of Paul’s teaching, many of the Jewish people believed in Jesus, and also some of the
important non-Jewish women and many non-Jewish men believed in him.

13But then the Jews in Thessalonica heard that Paul was in Berea preaching the message from God about Jesus. So they went to Berea and said things to the people there that made them very angry with Paul. **14**So right away some of the believers in Berea took Paul to the seacoast to go to another city. But Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea. **15**When Paul and the men who were taking him arrived at the coast, they got on a boat and went to the city of Athens. Then Paul said to the men who had come with him, “Tell Silas and Timothy to come to me here in Athens as soon as they can.” Then those men left Athens and returned to Berea.

16In Athens, Paul waited for Silas and Timothy to come. In the meantime, he walked around in the city. He became very distressed because there were many idols in the city. **17**So Paul went to the Jewish meeting place and talked about Jesus with the Jews there. He also spoke with the Greeks who had accepted what Jews believe. He also went every day to the open area of the city and had conversations with the people he met there.

18Paul met some teachers who liked to talk about what people believe. Some of them called themselves Epicureans, and others called themselves Stoics. They told Paul what they believed, and they asked him what he believed. Then some of them said to one another, “He really does not know what he is talking about.” But others said, “He seems to be teaching a philosophy about some gods that we have never heard of.” Those others said that because Paul was telling them that Jesus had died and then had become alive again{, and they thought that Resurrection was the name of a god}.

19So they invited Paul to come with them to the place where the philosophers in the city met. They told Paul, “Please come with us, because we would like to know what this new message is that you are teaching people. **20**You are teaching us some things that we do not understand. We want to know what they mean.” **21**The people of Athens and the people from other regions who had come to live there greatly enjoyed talking about new ideas.

22The philosophers asked Paul to stand in the middle of their group. He did, and then he said, “People of Athens, I have seen many of the things you do, and I can tell how religious you are. **23**I say that because, while I was walking through your city, I saw the things that you worship, I even saw an altar on which someone had carved these words: THIS HONORS A GOD WHOM WE DO NOT KNOW. So now let me tell you about that God whom you worship but whom you do not know.

24He is the God who made the world and everything in it. He rules over all beings in heaven and on earth. He does not live in temples that people have built. **25**He does not need to have people do anything for him. He is the one who makes people alive. He gives them everything they need.

26In the beginning, God created one couple, and from them God produced all the people groups that now live everywhere on the earth. God determined where and when each people group would live. **27**He wanted people to realize that they need him. Then maybe they would look for him and find him. People will find God if they sincerely look for him, because he is very close to each one of us. **28**It is because of God that we live, move, and exist, as one of you has said, ‘Because we are his children.’

29Therefore, because we are God’s children, we should not think that God is like an idol that a person would design and make out of gold, silver, or stone. **30**In the past, people did not know what God wanted them to do. So God did not punish them for what they did. But now God commands all people everywhere to stop doing wrong things. **31**God tells us that on a day that he has chosen, he is going to judge all of us justly. God will have Jesus, the man he has chosen, do the judging. God has made sure that we understand this by making Jesus alive again after he died.”

32When the philosophers heard Paul say that a man had become alive again after he had died, some of them laughed at him. But others asked him to come back and tell them about it another day. **33**After they said that, Paul walked away. **34**However, some of the people went with Paul and believed the message about Jesus. Among those who believed in Jesus was a man named Dionysius who was a member of the council. Also, there were a woman named Damaris and some other people with them who believed.

Chapter 18

1After that, Paul left the city of Athens and went to the city of Corinth. **2**In Corinth Paul met a Jew whose name was Aquila. He was from the region of Pontus. Aquila and his wife Priscilla had recently come from the city of Rome in Italy. They left Rome because Claudius, the Roman emperor, had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul introduced himself to Aquila and Priscilla. **3**Aquila and Priscilla made tents to earn money. Paul also made tents. So he stayed with them and they worked together. **4**Every Sabbath, Paul went to the Jewish meeting place. There he conversed with both Jews and non-Jews. He helped many of them to believe in Jesus.

5When Silas and Timothy arrived from the region of Macedonia, Paul felt strongly that he should devote all of his time to proclaiming the good news. So he kept telling the Jews sincerely that Jesus was the Messiah. **6**But the Jews argued with Paul and said bad things about him. So he shook the dust off his clothes {to show that he wanted to have nothing to do with them any more}. He said to them, “If God punishes you, it is your responsibility! I have done everything I could to show you the truth! From now on I will talk to people who are not Jewish!” **7**So Paul left the Jewish meeting place and went into a house that was next to it, and he preached there. Titius Justus, the owner of the house, was a non-Jewish man who worshiped God. **8**After that, the ruler of the Jewish meeting place, whose name was Crispus, and all of his family believed in Jesus. Many other people in Corinth heard about Crispus and his family. They also believed in Jesus and Paul baptized them.

9One night Paul had a vision in which Jesus spoke to him. He said, “Do not be afraid {of the people who are against you}. Keep telling people about me. **10**{You can keep speaking confidently} because I will help you. No one will be able to attack you and hurt you, because there are many people in this city who love me {and will defend you}.” **11**So Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half. He shared the good news about Jesus with the people there.

12Then a man named Gallio became the Roman governor of the province of Achaia. The Jewish leaders {thought he would take their side so they} got together and seized Paul. They brought him to the governor and made accusations against him. **13**They said, “This man is teaching people to worship God in ways that Roman law does not permit.” **14**Paul was about to say something to defend himself. But Gallio said to the Jewish leaders, “If this man had done something terribly wrong that broke our Roman laws, naturally I would listen to what you Jews want to tell me. **15**However, you are only complaining about things that Paul has been saying. You are arguing about who deserves what name. These are disputes about your own Jewish laws. So you must settle this yourselves. These are not the kind of things that deserve my attention!” **16**After Gallio said that, he told some soldiers to make the Jewish leaders leave the court. **17**But instead of leaving right away, the Jewish leaders grabbed the man who was in charge of their synagogue. His name was Sosthenes. They beat him right there in front of the judge’s seat {because they thought Paul had persuaded him to believe in Jesus}. Gallio did nothing to stop them.

18Paul stayed with the believers in Corinth for many more days. Then he got on a ship with Priscilla and Aquila and sailed for the province of Syria. {Paul left Silas and Timothy in Corinth.} He got his hair cut off in Cenchrea because of a vow that he had made. **19**They arrived at the city of Ephesus, and Priscilla and Aquila stayed there.

Paul himself entered the Jewish meeting place and had conversations with the Jews there about Jesus. **20**They asked him to stay longer, but he told them that he could not stay. **21**But as Paul left, he told the Jews in Ephesus, “I promise that I will come back if God wants me to.” Then Paul got on a ship and sailed away from Ephesus.

22When the ship came to the city of Caesarea, Paul got off. He went from there to Jerusalem and visited with the believers there. Then he returned to the city of Antioch{, where he had begun his trip}.

23Paul remained for some time with the believers in Antioch. Then he left and traveled to many cities in the regions of Galatia and Phrygia. He helped the believers in each city to believe more steadfastly in Jesus.

24While Paul was going through Galatia and Phrygia, a Jewish man named Apollos came to Ephesus. He was from the city of Alexandria, and he spoke very well. He had carefully studied the Scriptures. **25**Other believers had taught Apollos how Jesus wanted people to live. He enthusiastically taught those things correctly to the people in Ephesus.

However, he was not teaching everything about Jesus. He only knew that John the Baptizer had said to repent and receive baptism to get ready for Jesus the Messiah. **26**Apollos went to the Jewish meeting place and told the people there the things he had learned about Jesus. When Priscilla and Aquila heard what he taught, they asked him to come to their home. There they taught him more about Jesus.

27When Apollos decided that he would like to go to the region of Achaia, the believers in Ephesus told him that it would be good for him to do that. So they wrote a letter to the believers in Achaia saying that they should welcome Apollos. After he got there, he did much to help those whom God had kindly enabled to believe in Jesus. **28**The leaders of the Jews were denying that Jesus was the Messiah. But as many other people listened, Apollos showed convincingly that they were wrong. He did that by proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.

Chapter 19

1While Apollos was still in the city of Corinth, Paul {finished visiting the churches in Phrygia and Galatia. Then he} traveled through the province of Asia and came to the city of Ephesus. There he met some people who said that they were believers. **2**He asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed God’s message?” They answered, “No, we did not. We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” **3**So Paul asked, “So when someone baptized you, what did you know?” They replied, “We believed what John the Baptizer taught.” **4**Paul said, “John’s baptism was a sign that people were giving up their evil thoughts and deeds and wanting to obey God. But John also told people that the Messiah would soon appear and that they should believe in him. He was talking about Jesus.” **5**When those men heard that, they believed in Jesus as the Messiah. Paul then baptized them because they believed. **6**After that, Paul placed his hands on their heads one by one, and each of them received the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gave them power to speak in languages that they had not learned. They also spoke messages that the Holy Spirit gave them. **7**There were about 12 men whom Paul baptized and who received the Holy Spirit.

8For three months after that, Paul went to the Jewish meeting place in Ephesus on each Sabbath and preached there. He taught the people convincingly about how God should rule their lives. **9**But some of the Jews would not believe the message and did not want to hear it any more. In front of everyone in the synagogue, they said bad things about believing in Jesus. So Paul left them and took the believers with him to meet every day in a large room where a man whose name was Tyrannus usually taught people. **10**For two years Paul taught people there. In this way, most of the Jews and non-Jews who lived in the region of Asia heard the message about Jesus.

11God also gave Paul the power to do great miracles. **12**If those who were sick could not come to Paul, people would take pieces of cloth that Paul had touched and place them on the sick people. When they did this, the sick people would become well and the evil spirits would leave them.

13There were some Jews who traveled from place to place, commanding the evil spirits in those places to depart from people. Some of them tried to make evil spirits come out of people by commanding them to leave by the authority of Jesus. When those Jews were with a person who had an evil spirit, one of them would say, “I command you to come out by the authority of the man named Jesus whom Paul teaches about!” **14**Specifically, there were seven men who were doing this. They were the sons of a Jewish man named Sceva, who was a chief priest. **15**{One day two of the sons of Sceva were in the house of a man who had an evil spirit. They tried to make the spirit come out. But it did not come out.} Instead, the evil spirit said to them, “I know Jesus, and I know Paul, but no one has given you authority to make me leave this man!” **16**{After the evil spirit said that,} suddenly it made the man jump on them. He knocked down these two sons of Sceva and hurt them. He tore off their clothes and wounded them. They ran out of the house {to save their lives}. **17**Soon people throughout Ephesus, both Jews and non-Jews, heard what had happened. They realized that they should regard Jesus with great awe, and they spoke of him very respectfully.

18At that time, many people in the group of believers came to their leaders. While other believers were listening, they told about the evil things that they had been doing. **19**Now many of the believers had been sorcerers. They

took their scrolls that told about spells and curses and burned them in a place where everyone could see them. The believers added up how much the scrolls were worth. They were worth 50,000 silver coins.

20In this powerful way, many people heard the message about Jesus and believed in him.

21And after all of this happened, the Holy Spirit led Paul to decide to go to Jerusalem. Paul planned to visit the believers in the regions of Macedonia and Achaia first. He said, “After I have been to Jerusalem, I must also go to Rome.” **22**So Paul sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to the province of Macedonia. But he stayed for a while in the city of Ephesus in the province of Asia.

23But soon after that, people in Ephesus began to make a great amount of trouble because of Jesus and the teaching about him. **24**This happened because of a man in Ephesus whose name was Demetrius. He was a craftsman who worked with silver metal. He made statues of the goddess Artemis out of silver. Demetrius paid a lot of money to the workers who made these idols.

25Demetrius called together the craftsmen and the workers who made the idols. He said to them, “You all know that we make a lot of money doing our work. **26**But you know very well that Paul has led many people in Ephesus not to buy the statues that we make. In fact, the people from many other towns in our province no longer want to buy what we make. Paul tells people that the gods that we make are not gods {and that we should not worship them}. **27**{If people keep listening to Paul,} there is a risk that we will go out of business. Even worse, people will no longer come to the temple of our great goddess Artemis. They will not believe that she is worthy to worship. They will believe that she is not a goddess at all. Yet people throughout the province of Asia and even the whole world worship her!” **28**Then all the people there became very angry at Paul when they heard what Demetrius said. They began to shout, “The goddess Artemis of the Ephesians is great!” **29**This shouting made the people in the city very confused. They ran as a crowd to the city stadium {to try to find out what was happening}. Gaius and Aristarchus, two men from Macedonia who traveled with Paul, were out in the city. Some people took hold of them and dragged them to the stadium. **30**Now Paul wanted to go into the stadium to talk to the people. However, the other believers would not let him go there. **31**Also, some city rulers who were friends of Paul heard what was happening. They sent someone to warn Paul not to go into the theater.

32In the stadium, the people were very confused. Because they were confused, some were shouting one thing while others were shouting something else. But most of them did not even know why they were all in the stadium! **33**Then some of the Jews in the stadium pushed a man whose name was Alexander to the front of the crowd so that he could speak to the people. Some of the others there told him how he could do that. So Alexander put his hands up to get the crowd to stop shouting. He wanted to tell them that the Jews had not caused the trouble. **34**But many of the non-Jewish people knew that Alexander was a Jew. {They knew that the Jews did not worship the goddess Artemis.} So for two hours the non-Jews shouted together, “Great is the goddess Artemis of the Ephesians!”

35Then one of the city rulers made the crowd stop shouting. He said to them, “My fellow citizens, you do not need to be concerned about the worship of Artemis. People throughout the world know that our city of Ephesus is a special place where the goddess Artemis has her temple. Indeed, the sacred image of her fell down to us from heaven! **36**These are established facts. So you should be quiet now. Do not do anything foolish. **37**You should not have brought these two men here. They work together with Paul, but they have not done anything evil. They have not gone into our temples and taken things from there, and they have not spoken evil of our goddess. **38**If Demetrius and his fellow workmen want to accuse anyone of doing anything bad, they should do it in the right way. The courts are in session. There are judges present whom the government has appointed. They can present their case before the judges in court. **39**And if you are concerned about anything else, you should ask your rulers about it when those rulers meet together. **40**You should really not have rushed here shouting, because the Roman government may accuse us of having a riot today. If the rulers ask me what you were all shouting about, I will not know how to answer them. There was no good reason for it.” **41**That is what the city ruler said to the crowd. Then he told them all to go home{, and they did go to their homes}.

Chapter 20

[1]Then, after the people at Ephesus had stopped rioting, Paul called the believers together. He urged them to continue to trust in the Lord Jesus. Soon after that, he told them goodbye and left to go to the region of Macedonia. [2]Then Paul traveled through Macedonia and said many things to encourage the believers there. Then he continued on to Greece. [3]Paul then stayed in Greece for three months. He planned to return to Syria by ship. But he heard that some of the Jews there were planning to kill him as he traveled. So he decided to travel by land. Once again he went through Macedonia. [4]Now the men who were going to travel with him to Jerusalem were Sopater, the son of Pyrrhus, from the town of Berea; Aristarchus and Secundus, who were from the city of Thessalonica; Gaius, who was from the city of Derbe; Timothy, who was from the region of Galatia; and Tychicus and Trophimus, who were from the province of Asia. [5]{I, Luke, joined Paul when he came back through the city of Philippi.} Now the other seven men sailed to the city of Troas before we did, so they waited there for the two of us. [6]But Paul and I stayed in the city of Philippi until the end of the festival when Jewish people eat bread without yeast. Then we got on a ship that was going to the city of Troas. After five days we arrived there and met the other men who had traveled ahead of us. We all stayed in Troas for seven days.

[7]While we were in Troas, we gathered together on the first day of the week to share a meal with the other believers. {We met on that day because it was the day when Jesus became alive again after he died.} Paul was planning to leave Troas the next day, so when he spoke to the believers, he spoke for a long time. He kept speaking until midnight. [8]We had gathered in an upstairs room. Many oil lamps were burning there. [9]Now a young man whose name was Eutychus was in the room. He was seated on the sill of an open window. As Paul continued talking for a long time, Eutychus became sleepier and sleepier. Finally, he was sound asleep. He slipped out of the window and fell three stories down to the ground. Some of the believers went down immediately and picked him up. But he was dead. [10]Paul also went down. He lay down and stretched out on top of the young man. He also put his arms around him. Then he said to the people who were standing around, “Do not worry, because he is alive again!” [11]Then Paul went back up to the room where he was meeting with the believers. They shared a meal together. Afterwards he talked at length with the believers, until the sun came up. Then he left. [12]Before Paul left, the believers brought the young man who had fallen out the window back to the meeting. Everyone there was extremely encouraged to see that he was alive again.

[13]We then went to the ship. But Paul did not get on the ship with us in Troas, because he wanted to walk by himself to the town of Assos. So the rest of us got on the ship and sailed for Assos. We planned to bring Paul on board there. [14]And when we met Paul in Assos, he got on the ship with us and we sailed to the city of Mitylene. [15]The day after we reached Mitylene, we sailed from there and arrived at a place near the island of Chios. The day after that, we sailed to the island of Samos. The next day we left Samos and sailed to the city of Miletus. [16]Paul did not want to have a delay in Asia. So he had decided we should go to Miletus, south of Ephesus and past its harbor. He was trying to travel quickly because he wanted to arrive in Jerusalem, if possible, by the time of the Pentecost festival{, and it was almost time for that festival}.

[17]So when the ship arrived at Miletus, Paul sent a messenger to Ephesus to ask the elders of the group of believers there to come to talk with him.

[18]When the elders came to him, Paul said to them, “You know very well how I acted among you the entire time that I was with you, from the first day when I arrived here in the province of Asia {until the day I left}. [19]{You know how} I kept serving Jesus very humbly and how I sometimes wept. {You also know} how I suffered because the Jews who were not believers often tried to harm me. [20]{You also know} that{, when I preached God’s message to you,} I never left out anything that would help you. {You know that} I taught you God’s message when many people were present, and I also went to your homes and taught you there. [21]I preached both to Jews and to non-Jews. I told them all that they must stop their sinful behavior and start obeying God. They must believe in our Lord Jesus.”

[22]“And now, I want you to know, I am going to Jerusalem. I am going because the Holy Spirit has clearly shown me that I must go there, and I must obey him. I do not know exactly what will happen to me there. [23]But I do know that in each city I have visited, the Holy Spirit has told me that in Jerusalem people will put me in prison and will

cause me to suffer. **24**But I do not care even if people kill me, so long as I am first able to finish the work that the Lord Jesus has told me to do. He told me to tell people the good news that God saves us by doing for us what we do not deserve. **25**I have preached to you the message that God is reigning as king. But now, I must tell you, I know that today is the last time that you fellow believers will ever see me. **26**So I want you all to understand right now that if anyone who has heard me preach dies without trusting in Jesus, it is not my fault, **27**After all, I have told you everything that God has revealed {about how he saves us}. **28**You leaders must continue to believe and obey God's message, and you must also help all the other believers to do the same. The Holy Spirit has given you the responsibility of caring for them. Jesus died on the cross to make those who believe in him his own special people. **29**I know very well that after I leave, people who teach lies will come among you and will do great harm to the believers **30**Even some leaders from your own group will start teaching believers the wrong things. They will teach those wrong things to try to get disciples of their own. **31**So be careful that all of you keep believing the true message about Jesus! Remember that throughout the three years I was with you, I warned each one of you consistently and very sincerely that you should stay faithful to Jesus."

32"And now as I leave you, I ask God to protect you and help you to keep believing the message that he saves us by doing for us what we do not deserve. If you continue believing that message, it will make you strong, and God will give you the good things that he has promised to all of those who belong to him.

33As for me, I never tried to get money or fine clothing from anyone. **34**You certainly know that I worked with my hands to earn the money that my helpers and I needed. **35**In everything that I did, I showed you that we should work hard in order to have enough money to give some to those who are needy. We should remember that our Lord Jesus himself said, 'A person is happier when he gives to others than when he receives from them.'"

36When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all of the elders and prayed. **37**They all cried a lot, and they hugged Paul and kissed him. **38**They were very sad because he had said that they would never see him again. Then they all went with him to the ship.

Chapter 21

1Then, after we said goodbye to the elders from Ephesus, we got back onto the ship and sailed directly to the island of Cos. {There the ship stopped for the night.} The next day we sailed in the ship from Cos to the island of Rhodes. {There the ship stopped again.} The day after that, we went to the town of Patara. {The ship was going no farther than that.} **2**{At Patara we left that ship,} but we learned that there was another ship that would be leaving soon and going to the region of Phoenicia. So we got on that ship, and it left. **3**Now as we traveled across the sea, we saw the island of Cyprus. We sailed to the south of that island. We continued sailing until we arrived at the city of Tyre in the province of Syria. The ship had to stay there for several days because its workers needed to unload the cargo.

4But we learned where the believers in Tyre lived, so we went and stayed with them for seven days. God's Spirit revealed to some of the believers that Paul would suffer if he went to Jerusalem. So they encouraged Paul not to go there. **5**But when it was time for the ship to leave again, we prepared to continue on our way to Jerusalem. When we left Tyre, all the men and their wives and children went with us to the edge of the sea. We all knelt down there on the sand and prayed. **6**Then we all said goodbye to each other. We who were traveling with Paul got onto the ship with him, and the other believers returned to where they lived in Tyre.

7After we left Tyre, we continued on that ship to the city of Ptolemais. There were believers there, and we greeted them and stayed with them that night. **8**Then, on the next day, we left Ptolemais and sailed to the city of Caesarea. There we went to visit Philip. He had a reputation for telling others how to become disciples of Jesus. He was one of the seven men whom the believers in Jerusalem had chosen to take care of the widows. He invited us to stay in his home. **9**Now he had four daughters who were not married. Each of them frequently spoke messages that the Holy Spirit gave them.

10And after we had been in Philip's house for several days, a believer whose name was Agabus arrived in Caesarea
from the district of Judea. He frequently spoke messages that the Holy Spirit gave him. **11**Coming over to where we
were, he removed the belt from Paul's waist. He tied his own feet and hands with it. Then he said, "The Holy Spirit
says, 'The Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will tie up the hands and feet of the owner of this belt like this. Then they will
ask the non-Jewish people to arrest him as a criminal.'" **12**When the rest of us heard that, we and the other believers
there pled with Paul, "Please do not go up to Jerusalem!" **13**But Paul replied, "Please stop crying and trying to
discourage me from going! You should not cry, because I am willing to go to prison and also to die in Jerusalem
because I serve the Lord Jesus." **14**Then we realized that Paul was determined to go to Jerusalem. So we did not try
any longer to stop him. We said, "May the Lord's will be done!"

15Then, after those days in Caesarea, we prepared our possessions and left to go by land to Jerusalem. **16**Now
some of the believers from Caesarea also went with us. They took us to stay in the house of a man whose name
was Mnason. He was from the island of Cyprus. He had believed in Jesus when people were first beginning to hear
the message about him.

17And when we arrived in Jerusalem, a group of the believers greeted us happily. **18**Then, the next day, Paul and the
rest of us went to speak with James. {He was the main leader of the group of believers in Jerusalem.} All of the
other leaders were also there. **19**So Paul greeted them, and then he told them all of the things that God had
enabled him to do among the non-Jewish people. **20**And when they heard what God had done, James and the other
elders thanked God. Then one of them said to Paul, "Brother, you know that there are very many thousands of us
Jewish people who have believed in the Lord Jesus. You also know that we continue very carefully to obey the laws
that Moses gave us. **21**But people have told our fellow Jewish believers that when you are with non-Jews, you tell
the Jewish believers who live among them that they should stop obeying the laws of Moses. People say that you tell
those Jewish believers not to circumcise their sons and not to practice our other customs. {We do not believe that
they are telling the truth about you.} **22**But our fellow Jewish believers will surely learn that you have come here to
Jerusalem. {They will be angry with you because of what they have heard about you.} So you need to do something
to show them that what they have heard about you is not true. **23**So please do what we suggest to you. There are
four men among us who have made a vow to God. **24**Go with these men to the temple courts and do the
ceremonies that are necessary for you and for them to be able to worship in the temple. Then, when it is time for
them to offer the sacrifices that they need to offer because they have made these vows, pay for what they offer.
After that, they can shave their heads to show that they have done what they promised God they would do. When
people see you in the courts of the temple with those men, they will know that what people have told them about
you is not true. Instead, they will know that you obey all our Jewish laws. **25**Now as for the non-Jewish believers, we
elders here in Jerusalem talked about which of our laws they should obey. We wrote them a letter telling them what
we decided. We wrote that they should not eat meat that people have offered as a sacrifice to any idol. They should
not eat any blood. They should not eat meat from animals that people have killed by strangling them. We also told
them that they should not have sexual relations with someone to whom they are not married." **26**{Paul agreed to
do what James and the other leaders asked him to do.} The next day he took the four men and together they did
the ceremonies that were necessary for them to worship in the temple. After that, Paul went to the temple courts
and told the priests that these men had done everything they had promised God they would do. He told the priests
that they just needed to offer the sacrifices that the law required. Paul kept going to the temple courts with the
men until each one of them had offered the necessary sacrifices.

27Now it took seven days for the ceremonies that allowed the men to return to their regular lives after their vows.
Near the end of that time, some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul in the temple courtyard. They were very
upset with him, and they made many other Jews who were there upset with Paul as well. The Jews from Asia
grabbed on to Paul. **28**They shouted, "Fellow Israelites, come and help us to punish this man! This is the one who is
teaching people wherever he goes that the Jewish people are not special. He teaches people that they should no
longer obey the laws of Moses and that they do not need to respect this temple. He has even brought non-Jews
here into the court of our temple, causing this holy place to become polluted!" **29**They said these things because
they had seen Paul walking around in Jerusalem with Trophimus. He was a non-Jew from Ephesus. {The Jews did
not permit non-Jews to be in certain parts of the temple courtyard.} These Jews from the province of Asia thought
that Paul had brought Trophimus into the temple courtyard that day. **30**People all over the city heard that there was

trouble at the temple courtyard and they came running there. The crowd seized Paul and dragged him outside of the temple area. The temple guards quickly shut the gates to the temple courtyard so that the people could not do anything violent inside the temple area.

31While they were trying to kill Paul, someone ran to the fortress near the temple and told the Roman commander that many people in Jerusalem were rioting at the temple. 32The commander quickly gathered some officers and a large group of soldiers. They ran down the fortress steps to the temple area where the crowd was. When the crowd of people who were yelling at Paul and beating him saw the commander and the soldiers coming, they stopped beating him.

33Then the commander came to where Paul was and took hold of him. He commanded soldiers to fasten a chain to each of Paul's arms. Then he asked the people in the crowd, "Who is this man, and what has he done?" 34But some of the many people there were shouting one thing and some were shouting something else. And because the situation was so confused, the commander could not find out who Paul was. So he commanded that Paul be taken into the fortress that was connected with the temple court so that he could question him there. 35The soldiers led Paul to the steps of the fortress. But many people followed them, still trying to kill Paul. So the commander told the soldiers to carry Paul up the steps into the fortress. 36The commander knew that Paul was in danger because the crowd that was following the soldiers kept shouting, "Kill him! Kill him!"

37And as the soldiers were about to bring Paul into the fortress, he said {in Greek} to the commander, "May I speak with you?" And the commander said, "I am surprised that you can speak Greek! 38That must mean that you are that man from Egypt who rebelled against the Roman government not long ago. He took 4,000 violent men with him out into the desert {so that we could not catch him}." 39Paul said in reply, "I am a Jew. I was born in Tarsus, which is an important city in the province of Cilicia. I request that you let me speak to the people." 40Then the commander permitted Paul to speak. So Paul stood on the steps that led up to the fortress. He motioned with his hand for the crowd to be quiet. And after the people in the crowd became very quiet, Paul spoke to them in their own Hebrew language.

Chapter 22

1Paul said, "Jewish elders and my fellow Jews, please listen to me now while I answer your accusations." 2When the crowd of people heard Paul speaking to them in their own Hebrew language, they became even quieter and listened. Then Paul said to them, 3"I am a Jew, as are all of you. I come from the city of Tarsus in the province of Cilicia, but I grew up here in Jerusalem. When I was young, I learned the laws that Moses gave to our ancestors. Gamaliel was my teacher, and he taught me very accurately. I have obeyed those laws because I have wanted to obey God. I am sure that all of you here also obey those laws. 4That is why I tried to arrest those who believed the message of God about Jesus. I even looked for ways to kill them. Whenever I found men or women who believed the message, I arrested them and had the authorities put them in jail. 5The high priest knows this, and so do the other men who belong to our Jewish council. They gave me letters to take to their fellow Jews in the city of Damascus. Those letters gave me the power to go there and arrest people in that city {who believed in Jesus}. I could then take them as prisoners to Jerusalem so that the Jewish authorities could punish them.

6So I went to Damascus. About noon, as I got near to Damascus, suddenly a bright light from the sky flashed all around me. 7{The light was so bright that} I fell to the ground. Then I heard the voice of someone speaking to me {from up in the sky}. It said, 'Saul! Saul! Stop doing things to hurt me!' 8And I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' He replied, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, the one you are hurting.' 9Now the men who were traveling with me saw the bright light, but they did not understand what the voice was saying to me. 10Then I asked, 'Lord, what do you want me to do?' And the Lord told me, 'Get up and go into Damascus. A man there will tell you all that I have planned for you to do.' 11After that, I could not see, because that bright light had caused me to become blind. So the men who were with me took me by the hand and led me to Damascus. 12Then a man whose name was Ananias came to see me. He was a man who honored God and obeyed the Jewish laws. The Jews living in Damascus said very good things about him. 13He came and stood beside me. He said to me, 'Saul, my friend, see again!' Instantly I could see and I

saw him standing beside me. 14Then he said: ‘The God whom we worship and whom our ancestors worshiped has chosen you for a special purpose. He will show you what he wants you to do. He has allowed you to see Jesus the Messiah, {gloriously alive again}. You have heard him speak to you himself. 15He wants you to tell people everywhere what you have seen and heard from him. 16So please do not delay! Let me baptize you right now. Pray to the Lord Jesus and ask God to forgive you for your sins!’”

17“Then later I returned to Jerusalem. One day I went to the temple courtyard and while I was praying there, I saw a vision. 18In my vision I saw Jesus as he said to me, ‘Leave Jerusalem quickly, because the people here will not believe what you tell them about me!’ 19But I said to him, ‘Lord, they know that I went from one synagogue to another looking for people who believed in you. I was putting them in jail, and I was even beating them. 20They remember that when people killed Stephen because he said you were the Messiah, I stood there watching and approving of what they were doing. I even guarded the outer clothes that those who were murdering him had thrown aside!’ 21But Jesus said to me, ‘Leave Jerusalem, because I am going to send you far away from here to tell non-Jews about me!’”

22The people listened to what Paul was saying until he talked about Jesus sending him to non-Jews. Then they began shouting, “Kill him! A man like him does not deserve to live any longer!” 23And while they were shouting, they took off their robes and threw dirt into the air. 24So the commander told his soldiers to take Paul into the fortress. He told them to whip Paul to make him admit what he had done that had made the Jews so angry with him. 25Then they stretched his arms out and tied them so that they could whip him on his back. But Paul said to the officer near him, “You will be acting unlawfully if you whip me. I am a Roman citizen, and no one has declared me guilty of anything!” 26When the officer heard that, he went to the commander and reported it to him. He said to the commander, “This man is a Roman citizen! Surely you would not command us to whip him!” 27{The commander was surprised when he heard that.} He went into the prison and said to Paul, “Tell me, are you really a Roman citizen?” Paul answered, “Yes, I am.” 28Then the commander said, “I too am a Roman citizen. I paid a lot of money to become a Roman citizen.” But Paul said, “I have been a Roman citizen for my whole life.” 29The soldiers were about to whip Paul and to ask him questions about what he had done. But when they heard what Paul said, they immediately backed away from him. The commander also became afraid. He knew that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had broken the law when he commanded the soldiers to tie up Paul’s hands.

30The commander still wanted to know for sure why the Jews were accusing Paul. So the next day he told the soldiers to take the chains off Paul. He also called the chief priests and the other council members to meet. Then he brought Paul down the stairway to the temple courts. He took him to where the council was meeting and told him to stand in front of them.

Chapter 23

1So Paul looked at the Jewish council members and said, “My fellow Jews, throughout my life I have lived respecting our God. I do not know of anything that I have done that I knew was wrong.” 2When Ananias the high priest heard what Paul said, he told the men who were standing near Paul to hit him on the mouth. 3Then Paul said to Ananias, “God will punish you for that, you hypocrite! You sit there and judge me, using the laws that God gave Moses. But you yourself disobey those laws! You commanded those men to strike me without proving that I have done anything wrong!” 4But the men who were standing near Paul said to him, “You should not speak badly to God’s high priest!” 5Paul replied, “My fellow Jews, {I am sorry that I said that.} I did not know that the man who told one of you to hit me was the high priest. {If I had known that, I would not have talked badly about him.} I know that we can read in the Law of Moses, ‘Do not speak badly about any of your leaders.’”

6Now Paul knew that some of the council members were Sadducees and others were Pharisees. So he called out in the council hall, “My fellow Jews, I am a Pharisee. My ancestors have been Pharisees as well. You have put me on trial here because I am sure that one day God will cause those who have died to live again.” 7And when he said that, the Pharisees and Sadducees started to argue with one another {about whether people who have died will

become alive again}. The two groups strongly disagreed with each other. **8**They disagreed so strongly because Sadducees do not believe that after people die, they will become alive again. They also do not believe that there are angels or other kinds of spirits. But Pharisees do believe those things. **9**Then both groups started shouting at one another as they argued. Some of the teachers of the law who were Pharisees stood up. One of them insisted, "We think that this man has done nothing wrong. We believe that an angel or some other spirit spoke to him. {So we must all agree that he is innocent!}" **10**Then the Pharisees and Sadducees became very violent with one another. The commander became concerned that they would hurt Paul badly. So he told soldiers to come down from the fortress into the temple courtyard. He told them to take Paul away from the council members and bring him up into the barracks.

11That night, Paul saw Jesus come and stand near him. Jesus said to him, "Be brave! You have told people here in Jerusalem about me. I will protect you so that you can tell people in Rome about me too."

12The next morning some of the Jews who hated Paul met and talked about how to kill him. To make sure that they killed him, they all promised that they would not eat or drink anything before they had killed Paul. They asked God to kill them if they did not do what they promised. **13**Now there were more than 40 men who agreed to kill Paul. **14**They went to the chief priests and Jewish elders and told them, "God has heard us promise that we will not eat or drink anything before we have killed Paul. **15**So to help us, we request that you go to the commander and ask him, on behalf of the whole Jewish council, to bring Paul down from the fortress to meet with you again. Tell the commander that you want to talk to Paul some more. We will be waiting to kill Paul while he is on the way here."

16But the son of Paul's sister heard what they were planning to do, so he went into the fortress and told Paul. **17**When Paul heard about the plan to kill him, he called one of the officers and said to him, "Please take this young man to the commander. He needs to tell him something." **18**So the officer took Paul's nephew to the commander. The officer told the commander, "Paul, whom we are guarding here, asked to speak with me. He said, 'Please take this young man to the commander, because he needs to tell him something important.'" **19**So the commander took Paul's nephew by the hand and led him off by himself. Then he asked him, "What do you have to tell me?" **20**Then Paul's nephew replied, "There are some Jews who are going to ask you tomorrow to bring Paul down from the fortress to meet with their council again. They will say that they want to ask him some more questions. {But that is not true.} **21**So do not do what they ask you to do. There are actually more than 40 Jewish men who will be hiding and waiting to kill Paul when he passes by on his way to the council. They have even promised God that they will not eat or drink anything until they have killed Paul. They are ready to do it. They are just waiting for you to agree to do what they are asking." **22**The commander warned Paul's nephew, "Do not tell anyone that you have told me about their plan." Then he sent him away.

23Then the commander called two of his officers and told them, "Get a group of 200 soldiers ready to travel. Take along 70 soldiers riding horses and 200 other soldiers carrying spears. All of you must be ready to leave at nine o'clock tonight and go to the city of Caesarea. **24**Take along horses for Paul to ride, and escort him to the palace of Governor Felix." **25**Then the commander wrote a letter to send to the governor. This is what he wrote: **26**"Your Excellency, Governor Felix, this is Claudius Lysias writing to you. I send you my greetings. **27**I am sending you a man whose name is Paul. Certain Jews had seized him and were about to kill him. But I learned that he was a Roman citizen, so I and my soldiers went and rescued him. **28**I wanted to know what those Jews were saying that he had done wrong, so I took him to their Jewish council. **29**I listened while they asked this man questions and he answered them. The accusations they made against him had to do with their Jewish laws. But Paul has not disobeyed any of our Roman laws. So our officials should not execute him or even put him in prison. **30**Then someone told me that some Jews were planning to kill this man. So I sent him to you right away so that you could give him a fair trial there. I have also commanded the Jews who have accused him to go there to Caesarea and tell you why they are accusing him. Goodbye."

31So the soldiers did what the commander told them. They got Paul and took him with them during the night to the city of Antipatris. **32**The next day, the foot soldiers returned to Jerusalem and the soldiers who rode horses continued traveling to Caesarea with Paul. **33**When the soldiers who rode horses arrived in the city of Caesarea, they gave the letter to the governor and they brought Paul to him. **34**So the governor read the letter. Then he asked

Paul, “What province are you from?” Paul answered, “I am from Cilicia.” 35Then the governor said, “When the people who have accused you arrive, I will listen to what each of you says and then I will judge your case.” Then he commanded his soldiers to guard Paul in the palace that King Herod the Great had built.

Chapter 24

1Then, five days after the Roman soldiers brought Paul to Caesarea, the Jewish high priest Ananias traveled there from Jerusalem. He brought some other Jewish elders with him. They also brought a man who spoke well and knew the Roman laws well. His name was Tertullus. The Jewish leaders wanted him to persuade the governor that he should punish Paul. 2So the governor commanded his soldiers to bring Paul in. When Paul arrived, Tertullus started arguing that Felix should punish him. He said to the governor, “During the time that you have ruled us, we have lived well. By planning wisely, you have made many things better for our Jewish people. 3Therefore, Honorable Governor Felix, we continually thank you for everything that you have done for us, wherever you have done those things. 4But so that I do not use too much of your time, I will speak briefly. Please listen to what I have to say. I know you will make the right decision about this case. 5Now we can assure you that this man causes trouble wherever he goes. He encourages all the Jews to rebel against you Romans. He leads a radical group within Judaism. The members of that group call themselves the Nazarenes. 6He even tried to make our temple in Jerusalem no longer holy. And that is why we arrested him.[1] [And we wanted to judge him according to our law. 7[2] But Lysias, the commander of the Roman fortress, came with his soldiers and took him away from us, 8[3] sending us to you.] If you question him yourself about all these matters, you will be able to learn that everything I am saying about him is true.” 9Then the Jewish leaders who had come to Caesarea accused Paul too. They insisted that what Tertullus said about him was true.

10Then the governor signaled with his hand that he wanted Paul to speak. So Paul spoke to defend himself. He said, “Governor Felix, I know that you have governed this Jewish province for many years. Therefore I am eager to defend myself to you {because I know that you will listen to me and will judge me fairly}. 11You can easily confirm that I went to Jerusalem to worship God just 12 days ago. 12No one can say truthfully that they saw me arguing with anyone in the temple courts, because I did not do that. No one can say truthfully that they saw me causing people to riot in any Jewish synagogue or causing trouble anywhere else in Jerusalem, because I did not do that. 13So they cannot prove to you the things of which they are now accusing me. 14But I admit to you that this is true: I live as Jesus taught us to live. They claim that makes me different from other Jews, but that is how I obey the God whom our Jewish ancestors worshiped. I also believe everything that Moses wrote in the laws that God gave him and everything that the prophets wrote in their books. 15I believe, just as these men also believe, that some day God will cause everyone who has died to live again. God will do this both for those who were good and for those who were wicked. 16Because I believe that day will come, I always try to do what pleases God and what other people think is right. 17Let me tell you why I was in Jerusalem. After I had been in other places for several years, I returned there to bring some money to help my fellow Jews who were poor. While I was there, I also offered sacrifices in the temple courtyard. 18Some Jews from Asia saw me offering those sacrifices in the temple courtyard. I had completed the ritual that allowed me to worship God there. There was no crowd with me. I was not causing anyone to riot. 19No, it was those Jews from the province of Asia who caused the people to riot! And they should really be here in your court to accuse me if they think that I have done anything wrong. 20But if they do not want to do that, these Jewish men who are here should tell you what they think I did that was wrong when I defended myself in their council. 21They might say that I did this one thing wrong: When I was in their council, I shouted, ‘You are judging me today because I believe that God will cause all the people who have died to live again.’”

22Now Felix already knew much about the group people called the Way, and so he stopped the trial. He said to the Jewish leaders, “Later, when Commander Lysias comes here, I will decide this case.” 23Then Governor Felix told the officer who was guarding Paul to take Paul back to the prison. But he told him to allow Paul to do things freely in the prison. He also said that if Paul’s friends came to visit him, the officer should allow them to help Paul in any way that they wanted to.

24But several days later Felix came back with his wife Drusilla. She was a Jew. Felix called for Paul to speak with him. He {and Drusilla} listened to what Paul said about trusting in Jesus the Messiah. **25**Paul talked about what God wants people to do in order to please him. Paul also explained how people should control how they act. Paul said that there would be a time when God would judge all people. Felix became afraid after hearing those things. So he said to Paul, “That is all I want to hear now. But when I have time, I will ask you to come to me again.” **26**Felix was also hoping that Paul would give him some money. So he sent for Paul to come to him many times. Paul talked with Felix every time{, but he did not give him any money, so Felix did not tell his soldiers to release Paul from prison}.

27This went on for about two years. Then a man named Porcius Festus replaced Felix as the governor. And since Felix wanted to please the Jewish leaders, he left Paul in prison.

24:6 [1]
24:7 [2]
24:8 [3]

Chapter 25

1Then Festus began to rule as the governor of the province of Judea. Three days later, he left the city of Caesarea and traveled to Jerusalem. **2**In Jerusalem, the chief priests and some important Jewish leaders insisted urgently to Festus that Paul had done things that were very wrong. **3**They asked Festus to help them pursue their case against Paul. They asked him to order his soldiers to bring Paul to trial in Jerusalem. But they were really planning to attack him on the road and kill him. **4**But Festus replied, “Paul is in prison in Caesarea. Now I myself plan to travel back to Caesarea very soon.” **5**“So,” he said, “those of you who are able should travel there with me. If you want to accuse Paul of doing anything wrong, you can accuse him there.”

6Festus remained in Jerusalem with the Jewish leaders for about another week. Then he returned to the city of Caesarea. The next day, Festus commanded his soldiers to bring Paul to the hall where he was sitting in the judge’s seat. **7**So the soldiers brought Paul to Festus. The Jewish leaders who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him. They accused him of doing many bad things. But they were not able to prove any of them. **8**Then Paul spoke for himself. He said, “I have not broken any of the Jewish laws. I have not broken any of the rules about who can enter the temple. I have not broken any of the Roman laws.” **9**Festus, however, wanted to please the Jewish leaders. So he asked Paul, “Are you willing to travel to Jerusalem so that I can judge your case there?” **10**But Paul replied, “No, right now you are judging me, and you represent the Emperor. This is the right place for my trial. I have done nothing wrong to the Jewish people. You know that is the truth. **11**If I deserved to die for something I had done wrong, I would accept dying as my punishment. They are accusing me of many things, but I do not deserve to die for anything I have done. So no one can condemn me just to satisfy them. I claim my right to have Caesar himself judge me.” **12**Festus conferred with the officials who advised him. Then he told Paul, “You have asked Caesar to try your case, and so I will send you to Caesar.”

13Then, after several days, King Herod Agrippa arrived at Caesarea. His sister Bernice came with him. They were making a formal visit to welcome Festus as the new governor. **14**Since King Agrippa and Bernice stayed in Caesarea for several days{, they had time to speak with Festus about many things}. At one point Festus told Agrippa about Paul. He said, “There is a man here whom Felix kept in prison. **15**When I went to Jerusalem, the chief priests and the Jewish elders accused him of many things. They asked me to condemn him to death. **16**But I told them that when people accuse someone of a serious crime, we Romans do not condemn that person just to satisfy the accusers. Instead, we allow him to meet in person with his accusers and defend himself against what they say about him. **17**So when those Jews came here to Caesarea, I did not delay the trial at all. The day after they arrived, I convened the court and ordered the guards to bring in the prisoner. **18**I thought that the Jewish leaders would accuse Paul of doing many wrong things. But when they made their accusations against him, none of the accusations were serious. **19**Instead, they argued with him about what Jews should believe. They also argued about a man whose

name was Jesus. He had died, but Paul said he was alive. [20]I did not know how I could investigate this case from Caesarea. So I asked Paul, 'Are you willing to go to Jerusalem so that I can judge you there about these things?' [21]But Paul asked to stay in Caesarea until the emperor himself could judge his case. So I ordered my soldiers to keep him under guard until I could send him to Caesar." [22]Then Agrippa said to Festus, "Personally I would like to hear what this man has to say." Festus answered, "I will arrange for you to hear him tomorrow."

[23]So the next day Agrippa and Bernice entered the hall of judgment. The people there showed them much honor. Some Roman commanders and some of the important people of Caesarea came with them. Then Festus commanded the guards to bring Paul in. [24]After Paul entered, Festus said, "King Agrippa and all the rest of you who are here with us, you see this man! Many leaders of the Jews, both in Jerusalem and here, have protested to me about him. They have demanded that I put him to death immediately. [25]But I found that he had done nothing to deserve being killed. Even so, he has asked Caesar to judge his case. So I have decided to send him to Rome. [26]But I do not know exactly what to write to the emperor about him. That is why I have brought him here to speak to all of you, and especially to you, King Agrippa. You can question him. Then I will know what to write to the emperor. [27]After all, it makes sense that when I send a prisoner to the emperor in Rome, I should say exactly what wrong things people say he has done."

Chapter 26

[1]Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You may now speak on your own behalf." Then Paul held out his hand to show that he was about to speak. He defended himself by saying, [2]"King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate that I can explain myself to you today. I will tell you why the Jewish leaders are wrong when they say that I have done bad things. [3]I am especially fortunate because you know so much about the customs of us Jews and the questions that we argue about. So please listen to me as I tell my whole story."

[4]"My fellow Jews know how I have lived my life since the time I was a child. They know that I have always lived among Jews and that I received my education in Jerusalem. [5]They have known me since I was young. They could tell you, if they were willing, that as a Pharisee, I obeyed the most rigid customs of our religion very carefully. [6]Today I am on trial because I am confidently expecting that God will do what he promised to our ancestors. [7]Our 12 Jewish tribes are also waiting confidently for God to do what he promised. That is why they continue to honor him and worship him so diligently. And yet, Honored King, these Jewish leaders are saying that I have done wrong because I too am waiting confidently. [8]None of you should find it hard to believe that God would cause people who had died to live again.

[9]But I will admit that I too once found it hard to believe. I was sure that I should do everything that I could to stop people from believing in Jesus from the town of Nazareth. [10]So that is what I did when I lived in Jerusalem. I put many of the believers in prison. The chief priests there had given me the power to do that. And when the Sanhedrin was deciding whether to kill believers, I voted in favor of that. [11]I continually punished believers in Jesus in every synagogue where I could find them. I tried to force them to say that they did not believe in Jesus. I was so angry with them that I even went to foreign cities to find them.

[12]Because I told them I wanted to arrest believers in Damascus, the chief priests gave me the power to do that. So I traveled to Damascus. [13]While I was on my way there, O King, I saw a bright light in the sky. Even though it was around noon, this light was even brighter than the sun! It shone all around me and also around those who were traveling with me. [14]We all fell to the ground. Then I heard the voice of someone speaking to me in the Hebrew language. He said, 'Saul, Saul, you should not be fighting against me. You are harming yourself, like an animal that is kicking against a sharp prod.' [15]Then I said, 'Please tell me who you are.' And the person who was speaking to me said, 'I am Jesus! I am the one you are fighting against. [16]But get up off the ground now. I have appeared to you in order to make you my servant. I want you to tell other people who I am, now that you have seen me. I will show you more about myself later, and I want you to tell others about that too. [17]I am sending you both to Jewish people and to non-Jewish people. I will protect you from them. [18]I want you to help them recognize who I really am. I want

you to help them to live in a way that pleases God. I want them to know that God can make them free from the devil's influence. I want them to know that God will forgive their sins. I want them to receive the good things that people whom God saves because they believe in me will have forever.

19So, King Agrippa, I did what God told me to do when he gave me that vision. **20**First, I spoke to the Jews in Damascus. Then I spoke to the Jews in Jerusalem and in the countryside of Judea. I also spoke to the non-Jews there. I told them that they should stop sinning and ask God to help them live in the right way. I told them they should do things that showed they had stopped sinning.

21It is because I preached this message that some Jews seized me when I was in the temple courtyard and tried to kill me. **22**Because God has been helping me, I have been able to keep proclaiming these things to this very day. I have continued to tell people, regardless of their status, exactly what the prophets and Moses said would happen. **23**They said that the Messiah would suffer and die. They said that he would be the first person to live again after he had died. They also said that he would tell people how God was able to save them. He would tell this, both to his own Jewish people and to non-Jewish people."

24Before Paul could say anything further to defend himself, Festus shouted out loudly, "Paul, you are crazy! You have studied too much, and that has made you crazy!" **25**But Paul answered, "Your Excellency, Governor Festus, I am not insane! On the contrary, what I am saying is true and quite sane! **26**I can assure you that I am not crazy, because King Agrippa is familiar with the things I have been talking about so enthusiastically to him. I am very sure that he is aware of all of these things. They all happened very publicly. **27**King Agrippa, do you believe what the prophets wrote? I know that you believe those things." **28**Then Agrippa answered Paul, "I would need to hear much more than this to decide to become a Christian!" **29**Paul replied, "Perhaps you need to hear more, or perhaps you could decide now. But either way, I pray to God that you and all of the others who are listening to me today will become like me, except for these chains!" **30**Then King Agrippa stood up. The governor, Bernice, and all the other important people who had come in with them also got up **31**and left the room. After they left, they said to each other, "We should not execute this man or keep him in prison. He has done nothing to deserve that." **32**Then Agrippa said to Festus, "If this man had not appealed to Caesar, you could have released him."

Chapter 27

1Soon the governor decided it was time to send Paul by ship to Italy. {I, Luke, traveled with him.} He put Paul and some other prisoners under the control of a military officer whose name was Julius. This man was part of a group of soldiers who reported directly to the emperor. **2**So Julius put us aboard a ship from the city of Adramyttium in the province of Asia. This ship was about to sail to various places along the coast of Asia. In this way we began our journey by sea. Aristarchus, a man from the city of Thessalonica in the province of Macedonia, went with us. **3**The next day we arrived at the city of Sidon. There Julius treated Paul generously. He gave him permission to go see his friends in Sidon so they could help him with whatever he needed. **4**Then the ship sailed away from Sidon. We went along the coast of Cyprus, which was sheltered from the wind, because the wind was against us. **5**After that, we crossed over the sea close to the coasts of Cilicia and Pamphylia. The ship arrived at the city of Myra in the province of Lycia. We got off the ship there. **6**In Myra, Julius found a ship that had come from the city of Alexandria. It would soon sail to Italy. So he arranged for us to go aboard that ship and we left. **7**{The winds were still against us, so} we sailed slowly for many days. It was difficult, but we finally reached the city of Cnidus. From there the wind was so strong that the ship could not sail straight westward. So we sailed along the coast of the island of Crete instead{, where the wind was not blowing strongly.} We sailed past Cape Salmone, an area of land sticking out into the water. **8**The wind was still strong, and it prevented the ship from moving ahead fast. So we moved slowly along the coast of Crete. We eventually arrived at a port whose name was Fair Havens. It was near the city of Lasea.

9{Because the wind was blowing from the west,} the journey from Caesarea to Fair Havens had taken much more time than the captain and centurion had planned. It had become dangerous to sail because it was late in the year and the stormy season was approaching. So Paul said to the men on the ship, **10**and said to them, "Friends, God has shown me that if we continue sailing, we will suffer harm and lose many things. A great storm will destroy the

ship and its cargo and kill all of us." **11**But the Roman officer did not believe what Paul said. Instead, he believed the pilot and the captain when they told him the ship would be safe. **12**The harbor of Fair Havens did not protect the ships in it very well from winter storms. So most of the sailors recommended leaving Fair Havens. They hoped that they could reach Phoenix and spend the winter there. Phoenix is a city on the island of Crete with a good harbor. The harbor protects ships well from winds that blow from the southwest and northwest. **13**Because only a gentle wind was blowing from the south, the ship's crew thought that they could reach Phoenix safely. So they lifted the ship's anchor up out of the sea and sailed the ship close to the coastline of the island of Crete. **14**After a little while, however, a stormy wind blew down from the island. It was the kind of wind that the sailors called the Northeast Wind. **15**This stormy wind blew so strongly against the front of the ship that we could not sail into it. So the sailors decided to sail in the direction that the wind was blowing. It pushed us across the sea very quickly. **16**However, the sailors were able to sail the ship on the side of a small island that was sheltered from the wind. The name of the island was Cauda. It was very difficult, but the sailors were finally able to gain control of the lifeboat. **17**The sailors hoisted the lifeboat up onto the ship. Then they wound its ropes around the hull of the ship. They became concerned that they would get stuck in the soggy sand at Syrtis. So they took down the sails {to go more slowly}. This meant they could not steer the ship, and it went wherever the wind blew it. **18**But the wind and the waves continued to toss the ship about roughly. So on the next day, the sailors began to throw overboard the things that the ship was carrying. **19**Then, on the third day of the storm, the sailors threw overboard most of the ship's sails, ropes, and poles. They did this deliberately {in order to make the ship lighter}. **20**But the wind continued to blow very strongly against the ship. The sky was always full of dark clouds so that the sailors could not see the sun or the stars to navigate. After all this we lost hope that we would even survive.

21None of us on the ship had eaten for many days. Then one day, Paul stood up in front of us and said, "Friends, you should have listened to me when I said that we should not set sail from Crete. Then, we would not have suffered all this damage. **22**But now please do not be afraid, because none of us will die. The storm will destroy the ship but it will not destroy us. **23**I know this because last night an angel came and stood by me. The God who protects me and who told me to tell others about him sent this angel. **24**The angel said to me, 'Paul, do not be afraid. You will reach Rome safely and have the opportunity to testify to the emperor. I want you to know that God is being kind to you. He will make sure that everyone who is traveling with you will also survive.' **25**So cheer up, my friends, because I believe that God will make this happen exactly as the angel told me. **26**However, the ship will crash on some island, and we will go ashore there."

27Now on the fourteenth night after the storm began, the storm was still blowing the ship across the open sea. At about midnight, the sailors thought that the ship was getting close to land. **28**So the sailors lowered a rope with a weight on the end to measure how deep the water was. When they pulled the rope up again, they measured it and saw that the water was 40 meters deep. A little later, they measured again and found that the water was 30 meters deep. **29**{Because the water was getting shallower,} the sailors were afraid that the ship might crash onto some rocks. So they threw four anchors into the water from the end of the ship. Then they prayed that it would soon become light {so that they could see where the ship was going}. **30**Some of the sailors were planning to escape from the ship. They did not want anyone to know what they planned to do. So they pretended that they needed to put the lifeboat in the water so they could use it to lower some anchors from the ship's front. **31**But Paul said to the Roman officer and the soldiers, "If the sailors do not stay in the ship, you will not survive." **32**So the soldiers cut the ropes and the lifeboat dropped into the sea.

33Just before dawn, Paul encouraged everyone on the ship to eat something. He said, "For the past 14 days you have been waiting and watching and not eating anything. **34**So now I urge you to eat some food, because you must do this to live. The storm will not kill any of you{, but if you do not eat, you will die}." **35**Then after Paul said that, while everyone was watching, he took some bread and thanked God for it. Then he broke the bread into pieces and began to eat some of it. **36**Then they all cheered up and ate some food. **37**Altogether there were 276 of us on the ship. **38**When everyone had eaten enough, the sailors made the ship lighter by throwing the rest of the wheat into the water.

39At dawn we could see land, but the sailors did not know what it was. However, they could see a bay that had a beach. They decided to try to run the ship up onto this wide area of sand at the water's edge. **40**So they cut the ropes that attached the anchors to the ship and let the anchors fall loose into the water. They also untied the ropes that held the rudders to the ship. They raised a sail to the top of the mast so that the wind would blow into it. Then they steered the ship toward the shore. **41**But the ship sailed into turbulent waters and ran onto a sandbank that was just under the waves. The front of the ship stuck there and could not move. Big waves beat against the back of the ship and it began to break apart.

42The soldiers wanted to kill all the prisoners so that none of them could swim away and escape. **43**But the Roman officer wanted to save Paul. So he stopped the soldiers from killing the prisoners. Instead, he commanded everyone who could swim to jump off the ship first into the water and swim to shore. **44**Then he told the ones who could not swim to hold onto something that would float and drift toward the shore. Some held onto wooden boards that the waves had broken loose from the ship. Some held onto articles from the ship that would float. We did what he said, and in that way all of us made it safely to the shore.

Chapter 28

1After we had arrived safely on the shore, we learned that we were on an island whose name was Malta. **2**The people who lived there took care of us very generously. It was cold and it was starting to rain. So they lit a fire and invited all of us to come and warm ourselves. **3**Now Paul {was helping by} collecting a bundle of pieces of wood to burn. When he put them on the fire, a poisonous snake came out from the bundle to escape from the heat of the fire. It bit Paul on his hand and clung to it. **4**Now the people from the island saw the snake dangling from Paul's hand. They said to each other, "This man has probably murdered someone. He has escaped from drowning in the sea. But the goddess Justice is punishing him anyway. He will die from this snake bite." **5**But Paul shook his hand hard so that the snake would fall off his hand and back into the fire. The snake fell off and Paul was not hurt at all. **6**Still, some of the people of the island expected that Paul's body would soon swell up because of the snake bite. Others thought he would suddenly fall down and die. But they waited a long time and did not see either of those things happen to him. So the people decided they had been wrong about who Paul was. They said to one another, "This man is not a murderer. He must be a god{, because that snake bite would have killed any human being}!"

7Now the people of the island had built the fire near some fields that belonged to a man whose name was Publius. He was the chief official on the island. He invited us to come and stay in his home. He took very good care of us for three days. **8**At that time Publius' father had fever and a stomach illness. He was lying sick in bed. So Paul visited him and prayed for him. Then Paul placed his hands on him and healed him. **9**After Paul healed Publius' father, the rest of the people on the island who were sick came to him and he healed them too. **10**The island people also brought us gifts and showed in other ways that they greatly respected us. Later on, when we were ready to leave, they brought us food and other things that we would need on the ship.

11We stayed on Malta for a total of three months. Then we left on a ship that had spent the winter there. The ship was from Alexandria and was going to Italy. On the front of the ship there were carved images of the twin gods whose names were Castor and Pollux. **12**When we arrived at the city of Syracuse, we stayed there three days. **13**Then we sailed away from Syracuse and arrived at the city of Rhegium in Italy. The next day, the wind began to blow from the south. So in only two more days, we reached the town of Puteoli. {There we got off the ship and went the rest of the way to Rome by land.} **14**In Puteoli we met some fellow believers who asked us to stay with them for seven days. After that, we continued on to Rome.

15Some fellow believers in Rome had heard that we were coming and they came to meet us. Some of them met us at the place on the Appian Road whose name was the Market. Others met us at the place whose name was the Three Inns. When Paul saw those believers, he thanked God and felt brave. **16**After we arrived in Rome, the authorities there permitted Paul to live in a home rather than in prison. But a soldier was always there to guard him.

17Now after Paul had been in Rome for three days, he sent a message to the Jewish leaders to come and talk with him. And when they arrived, Paul said to them, “My dear kinsmen, I have not opposed our people or spoken against the customs of our ancestors. {But some Jews in Jerusalem seized me and tried to kill me. A Roman commander rescued me and later} sent me as a prisoner to the city of Caesarea so that the Roman authorities could put me on trial. **18**The Roman authorities questioned me and wanted to release me because I had not done any bad thing for which I should be executed. **19**But the Jewish leaders argued that the Romans should not set me free, So I had to request that the emperor judge me here in Rome. But I did not do that because I wanted to accuse our leaders of doing anything wrong. **20**So I asked you to come here so that I could tell you why I am a prisoner. It is because I believe in what we Jews confidently expect that God will do for us.” **21**Then the Jewish leaders replied, “We have not received any letters from our fellow Jews in Judea about you. And none of our fellow Jews who have come here from Judea have said anything bad about you. **22**But we would appreciate you telling us what you think about this group that you belong to. Please tell us, because we are aware that in many places people are speaking against it.”

23So they decided that they would come back on another day. On that day, even more people than before came to where Paul was staying to hear Paul speak. Paul explained many things to them. He talked about how God would rule everyone. He also talked about how various places in the Scriptures foretold that Jesus would come. Paul talked for that entire day with the people who had come to his house. **24**Paul was able to persuade some of those Jews that the things he said about Jesus were true. But some others would not believe that they were true. **25**The two groups argued with each other. When they were about to leave, Paul told them one more thing. He said, “The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your ancestors when he said something through Isaiah the prophet.

26He said, ‘Go to the people of Israel and say to them:

“You seem to be listening but you never really understand what God is saying.

You seem to be looking but you never really recognize the things that God is doing.” **27**These people do not understand because they have become stubborn.

It is as if they have become deaf.

It is as if they have closed their eyes.

It is as if they have done this because they do not want to see well,

and they do not want to hear well,

and they do not want to understand well.

If they did pay attention to me and understand what I am telling them, they would stop sinning and live in the right way again.

If they did that, I would restore them.’

28Therefore, you should know that God is offering to save the non-Jews, and many of them will accept his offer.” **29***[1]* [When he had said these things, the Jews went away. They were having a great dispute among themselves.]

30After that, Paul stayed in Rome for two whole years in a house that he rented. Many people came to see him. He received each of them gladly and spoke with them. **31**He preached about how God would rule over everyone. He also taught people about the Lord Jesus the Messiah. He spoke about these things very openly. No one tried to stop him.

28:29 *[1]*

Romans

Chapter 1

1{I,} Paul, {am writing this letter}. I serve the Messiah Jesus. He called me to represent him and specially chose me to proclaim God's good news. **2**God previously promised this good news by means of his spokesmen who prophesied about it {and wrote it down} in the sacred writings. **3**{This good news is} about God's Son. He was born a natural descendant of David. **4**In accordance with the Holy Spirit, God powerfully demonstrated that Jesus is his Son by causing him to live again after he had died. {God's Son is} Jesus the Messiah, {who is} our Lord. **5**Jesus favored us who represent him and authorized us to represent him on his behalf in order that all the nations would obey {God} by trusting {in Jesus the Messiah}. **6**Jesus the Messiah has also called you who are {living} among the nations. **7**{I am writing this letter} to all of you {believers} who dwell in the city of Rome. God loves you and has called you to be people who belong to him. {May} God our Father and the Lord Jesus the Messiah {continue to} be kind to you and make you peaceful.

8Now, {the} first {thing I want to tell you, is that} I am constantly thanking my God through Jesus the Messiah for all of you {believers in the Messiah}. {I thank him} because {people} throughout the known world are proclaiming how you trust {in Jesus}. **9**{I can say this truthfully} because God testifies for me that I frequently pray for you. I serve him devotedly by proclaiming the good news about his Son{, Jesus}. **10**{When} I pray, I very often request that I might finally succeed in coming to {visit} you because God wants {me to}. **11**{I pray for this} because I deeply desire to see you {in person} in order to share some kind of gracious gift with you from the Holy Spirit in order to help you become spiritually stronger. **12**In other words, {I want to share some gracious gift with you} in order that we may mutually encourage one other. Both you and I can help each other by sharing how we mutually trust in God. **13**My fellow believers, I certainly want you to know that I planned to visit you many times. But {God} has prevented me from visiting you until the present time. {I planned to visit you} in order to lead some people to believe in Christ among you as well, just like {how I have} also {done so} among the other nations. **14**I am obligated {to proclaim the good news} to all non-Jewish people, whether or not they are {culturally} Greek and whether or not they are educated. **15**So then, if it were my choice, I would gladly proclaim the good news to you who dwell in Rome.

16{I would gladly do this} because I am deeply honored to proclaim the good news because it is the powerful way that God uses to save anyone who believes {it}. {This is true for} both the Jews {who} first {heard the good news} and then everyone else. **17**{This is true} because whenever {people proclaim} the good news, they reveal how God makes people righteous, which is entirely through trusting {in the Messiah}. This is what {the prophet Habakkuk meant when} he wrote {in the Scriptures}, "But the person whom God makes righteous will live forever by trusting {in God}."

18{This is true} because from where God dwells he is revealing how he is furious toward {and will judge} every person who does ungodly and unrighteous things. These people suppress the things that God says are true by living in an unrighteous manner.

19{God will judge them} because what anyone can know about God is obvious to these people since God has made it obvious to them. **20**{This is true} because people can clearly perceive those things about God that they cannot see {with their eyes}. {These things are} how powerful God is and the fact that he is God. {People could perceive these things} since the time God created the universe. The things that God has made have understood {these things}. For this reason, people cannot excuse themselves {from acknowledging that God exists}. **21**{People cannot excuse themselves} because they do not honor him as God, even though they know that he exists. They also refuse to thank him. In contrast, they think about worthless things, and they are unable to understand spiritual things. **22**{Although} they assert that they are wise, they are {actually} fools. **23**They stop glorifying the God who is

immortal, and instead they glorify idols that resemble mortal people, birds, four-legged animals, and animals that crawl {on the ground}.

24Consequently, God lets these people do the lustful things that they desire to do, so that they become {spiritually} impure and they disgrace their bodies with one another {by doing sexually immoral acts}. **25**These people stop believing what is true about God and instead believe what is false {about idols}. They reverently worship things that God has created, instead of {worshiping} {the God} who created those things. {He is the one} whom people should bless forever! May it be so!

26Because {these people do that}, God lets them do the dishonorable things they strongly desire {to do}. For example, their women stop doing natural {sexual} acts {with men} and instead do unnatural {sexual} acts {with women}. **27**Similarly, the men also stopped doing natural {sexual} acts with women {and} lusted intensely after other men. These men do shameless {sexual} acts with each other. They experience God penalizing them in their own bodies. {God must penalize them} because they pervert {God's natural sexual acts}.

28As these people thought that acknowledging God was worthless, God let their minds become worthless. As a result, they do inappropriate things. **29**{These people} are completely controlled by all kinds of unrighteous, wicked, covetous, and malicious {thoughts}. They are completely willing to be jealous, take another's life, argue, deceive, and commit evil deeds {against others}. They reveal secrets {about others}. **30**They speak badly of {other people}. They hate God. They act violently. They think too highly of themselves. They boast {about themselves}. They think of {new kinds of} evil things {to do}. They do not obey their parents. **31**These people are {morally} foolish. They do not do what they promise to do. They do not care {about other people}. They do not show mercy {to others}. **32**These people fully understand that God has righteously declared that people who keep doing such {inappropriate} things deserve to die {spiritually}. {Nevertheless,} they not only keep on doing those {inappropriate} things, but they even happily approve of people who do such things!

Chapter 2

1Consequently, any one of you who judges another person cannot excuse yourself {at all} {when God condemns you}. {This is} because you are actually condemning yourself when you judge someone else, since you who judge someone else do the exact same things {that they do}! **2**Certainly, we acknowledge that God will correctly judge those people who continue doing such {inappropriate} things. **3**You who judge the people who continue to do such {inappropriate} things while you do the exact same things yourself should certainly not think that you can escape when God judges you! **4**You who despise {how} abundantly kind, tolerant, and patient God is must certainly know that God's kind acts {are meant to} cause you to repent. **5**Instead, because you are stubborn and refuse to repent, you are causing God to punish you even more severely. {This will happen} when God punishes {sinners} and reveals how justly he judges.

6God will {justly} reward or punish everyone for whatever they do. **7**Living eternally {is how God repays} those people who keep striving for God to glorify, honor, and preserve them {forever}. {They do this} by persisting in doing what is good. **8**By contrast, God will fiercely punish those people who refuse to do what he says is true and right because they are selfishly ambitious. **9**{God will cause} every human being who does what is evil to become distressed and troubled. {This will happen} especially to the Jew {who does what is evil} and also to everyone else {who does so}. **10**By contrast, God will glorify, honor, and reconcile every person who does what is good. {This will happen} especially to the Jew {who does what is good} and also to everyone else {who does so}. **11**{These things are true} because God is impartial.

12{We know this about God,} because he will punish forever all people who sin without {knowing} the laws {that God gave the Jews} {even though} they do not know those laws. At the same time, God will judge according to his laws whoever sins while knowing those laws. **13**{God will judge everyone who sins} because God does not make righteous those people who {only} hear his laws. Rather, God will make righteous those people who obey his laws. **14**{God will judge everyone who sins} because whenever nations which do not know the laws {that God gave the

Jews} naturally obey rules from those laws, {they prove that} they know laws within their minds even though they do not know God's laws. **15**{By naturally following some laws that God gave through Moses,} these people demonstrate that God has made each person aware of how to obey his laws. What they think shows that this is true, in that what each of them thinks will either accuse or even defend their actions. **16**{This will happen} at the time when God {finally} judges the hidden thoughts that people think. {God's} good news that I proclaim teaches that he will judge {mankind} through the Messiah Jesus.

17Now, {I am addressing} you who identify yourselves as Jews: You depend on the laws {God gave you} {to avoid God's judgment}. You brag that you know God. **18**You know what God wants. Also, since {some people} have taught you {God's law}, you approve of what is superior. **19**You have even convinced yourselves that you {Jews} are the only ones who can teach those {non-Jewish people} who do not know {about God}. {You are convinced that} only you can enable ignorant people to understand {who God is}. **20**{You have convinced yourself that} you should instruct people who are foolish. {You have convinced yourself that} you should teach {people who are as ignorant as} infants. {You think this way} because you know the laws {God gave the Jews}, which fully contain what we can know and what is true. **21**So {even though you Jews have convinced yourself that these things are true}, you should teach yourselves to do what you teach others to do {because you don't do those things}! You keep telling others that they should not steal, but you steal! **22**You keep telling {people} not to have sexual relations with people whom they did not marry, {but} you do so! You {supposedly} detest idols, {but} you ransack temples {that contain idols}! **23**You brag about {how well you understand} the laws {God gave you}, {but} you disgrace God by disobeying those laws! **24**{These things are true} because it is what {the prophet Isaiah meant when} he wrote {in the Scriptures}, "The nations say bad things about God because of {how wickedly} you {Jews act}."

25{You Jews who have sinned will be judged} because, being circumcised {only} benefits you if you obey the laws {God gave you}. However, if you disobey those laws, being circumcised does not benefit you at all. **26**So then, if uncircumcised people obey what God requires in the laws {he gave the Jews}, God will regard those uncircumcised people as being circumcised. **27**And people who are physically uncircumcised yet fully obey the laws {from God} will judge you {Jews}! Although {you know} the written rules {God gave the Jews} and you are circumcised, you have disobeyed those laws! **28**{This is true} because a {true} Jew is not someone who does Jewish rituals that people can see. {Similarly,} people cannot see {true} circumcision on a person's body. **29**Rather, a {true} Jew is one {by means of something} that people cannot see. {True} circumcision {happens} in a person's mind {and} the {Holy} Spirit does it. {Obeying} the written rules {God gave the Jews} cannot do it. God commends a true Jew, but other people do not.

Chapter 3

1{You Jews might say,} {"If what you have said is true,} then surely being a Jew is not advantageous! Surely being circumcised is not beneficial at all!" **2**{Then I would say, "Being a Jew benefits a person} in many ways!" {This is} certainly {true} because, first of all, God trusted the Jews with preserving what he had said {in the Scriptures}. **3**{So you might say,} "Some of these {Jews} were certainly unfaithful {to God}! How unfaithful those people are certainly cannot invalidate how faithful God is!" **4**{Then I would say,} "Of course not!" On the contrary, God {is always} truthful, but everyone else is not. This is what {David meant when} he wrote {in the Scriptures}, "The result {of my sin} is that people will acknowledge that you{, God,} are right when you speak and victorious when people {try to} judge you."

5But {you might say,} "Suppose {this is true and} how unrighteous we {Jews} are {actually} confirms how righteous God is. {That} could not {possibly mean} that God is unrighteous because he punishes {us}!" (When I talk like this, I am expressing how human beings think.) **6**{Then I would say,} "Of course not! If God were unrighteous when he punishes us, then he could not {possibly} judge {anyone in} the world!" **7**But {then you might say,} "Suppose {this is true, and} my lying further glorifies God {and} how truthful he is. {If that is so,} then {surely} God should not still judge me as if I were sinning! **8**And {if this is true, then} you should {just} tell us to act wickedly in order that good things can happen!" (This is exactly what some people say falsely about me and claim that I say. It is right {for God} to condemn people {who speak and act} this way!)

9{You Jews might then say,} {“If what you have said is true,} then we are surely not superior {to non-Jewish people}!” {And I would say that} indeed we are not. {I say this} because I have previously charged that all Jews and non-Jewish people cannot stop being sinful. **10**This is what {the prophets meant when} they wrote {in the Scriptures}, “No one is righteous, no one at all!”

11“No one thinks wisely. No one is even trying to know God!

12Everyone has refused to obey {God}. As a whole, they are worthless {for doing what God wants}. No one is kind, no one at all!”

13“What people say is morally corrupt {like the smell of rotten corpses in} a grave! They constantly deceive {people} by what they say!” “What they say hurts people, like the venom of venomous snakes!” **14**“They constantly curse {others} and speak harshly {against them}.” **15**“They rush eagerly to murder people. **16**Wherever they go, they destroy lives and make people suffer. **17**They do not understand how to live peacefully {with others}.” **18**“They do not fear God {at all}!”

19Certainly, we Jews know all that God says in his laws applies to {the Jews,} to whom God gave his laws. This is in order that no one can excuse themselves {from being judged by God.} {This is} also in order that God can justly punish everyone in the world as guilty. **20**{This is true} because God will not make anyone righteous with himself {simply} because they obey the laws {he gave the Jews}. {This is so} because those laws {only} make people aware of how sinful they are.

21But now God has revealed how he makes people righteous. {Becoming righteous} is not related to obeying the laws {God gave the Jews}. {Yet,} in what they wrote {in the Scriptures} Moses and the prophets testify {about how God makes people righteous}. **22**How God makes people righteous is by trusting in Jesus the Messiah. {God will make} all {types of} people {righteous} if they trust in {Jesus}. {This is} because God does not distinguish {between different types of people}. **23**{This is} because all {types of} people sin and fail to acquire the glorious status from God. **24**God makes {these sinful people} righteous as a gift because he is so kind. {People receive this gift from God} when God unites them to Jesus the Messiah, who redeemed them {from being punished for being sinful}. **25**God offered Jesus as the one who atones {for everyone’s sins}. {People are rescued from being punished for being sinful} by trusting in his {sacrificial} death. {God did this} in order to show how God makes people righteous. {This happened} because God disregarded people’s sinful acts that they had previously done. **26**{God did this} because he is so tolerant. {God also did this} in order to show how he makes people righteous during our time. {This is} for the purpose of showing that God is righteous and that he makes people righteous {if} they trust in Jesus.

27{You Jews might say,} {“If what you have said is true,} then surely no one can boast!” {Then I would say,} “Indeed, no one can!” {Then you might say,} “Surely {we can become righteous} by obeying the laws {God gave the Jews}! Surely doing {those things} {will make us righteous}!” {Then I would say,} “Absolutely not! On the contrary, {people become righteous} by trusting {in Jesus the Messiah}. **28**Indeed, we {Jewish Christians} consider people to become righteous by trusting {in Jesus the Messiah}. {Being righteous} is not related to doing those things {that God commanded} in the laws {he gave the Jews}.” **29**{Or you might say,} “Surely God is not only the God of the Jews. Surely he is the God of {all} the nations too!” {So I would say,} “Absolutely! He is the God of {all} the nations too. **30**{This is true} because there is certainly {only} one God {for all people}. He will make righteous {both} the Jews who trust {in Jesus} and the non-Jewish people who trust in {Jesus}.” **31**{You Jews might say,} “Then surely we make the laws {God gave us} invalid by trusting in {Jesus}!” {So I would say,} “Of course not! On the contrary, we confirm that {what God said in} those laws is valid.”

Chapter 4

1{You Jews might say,} {“If what you have said is true,} then surely our physical ancestor Abraham found out {about it}. **2**{This must be true} because if Abraham became righteous based on doing the things {that God commanded in

his laws}, then he could brag {about it}." On the contrary, {I would say that} {Abraham could} not possibly {boast about it} to God! **3**{I say this} because, {Moses} surely tells {us} in the Scriptures, "Abraham trusted in God, and God considered Abraham to be righteous because he trusted in him." **4**Indeed, when a person works, he does not consider the wage {he earns} to be a gracious gift. On the contrary, {that person considers the wage he earns} to be what his employer owes him. **5**By contrast, when a person does not obey {the laws God gave the Jews}, but trusts in the God who can make unrighteous people righteous, God considers him to be righteous because he trusted in him. **6**This is also the same thing that David wrote {in the Scriptures} about how blessed people are when God considers them to be righteous, even though they do not do those things {that God commanded}. {David wrote:}

7"People are so happy when God forgives their lawless acts! People are so happy when God no longer acknowledges their sinful acts! **8**Any person whom the Lord never again considers to be sinful is so happy!"

9Therefore, these happy people are not only circumcised {Jews} but even uncircumcised people {who are not Jews}! {This must be true} because we {Jews} quote {the scripture that states,} "God considers Abraham to be righteous because he trusted {in him}." **10**So then, {you surely know} when Abraham trusted in God and God considered {him to be righteous}! {You surely know whether this happened} before he was circumcised or afterward! {Indeed,} it was not while Abraham was circumcised, but while he was still uncircumcised {that God considered him to be righteous}. **11**Abraham was circumcised as a mark {in his body} to prove that God had made him righteous because Abraham trusted {in him} before he was circumcised. {This happened} in order for him to become the {spiritual} ancestor for every non-Jewish person who trusts in God in order that God would consider them to be righteous {because they trust in him}. **12**{This} also {happened in order for Abraham to become} the {spiritual} ancestor of those people who are circumcised, that is, those circumcised {Jews} {who are not only circumcised in their bodies}, but who also trust in God the same way that our ancestor Abraham did even before he was circumcised.

13{This is true} because {when} God promised Abraham and those who descend from him that the {whole} world would belong to him, {God did not promise this} because {Abraham obeyed} the laws {God gave the Jews}. Rather, {God promised this} because God had made {Abraham} righteous because Abraham trusted {in him}. **14**{This is true} because, if people could inherit {what God promised Abraham} by obeying the laws {he gave the Jews}, {then} trusting {in God} would become useless! What God promised would also become invalid. **15**{This is} because the laws {God gave the Jews} are intended to punish {those who disobey them}. However, where God's laws do not exist, no one can disobey {them}. **16**This is why what God promised comes by trusting in him in order to show how kind he is. {God was so kind} in order that he could secure what he promised to everyone who has {spiritually} descended {from Abraham}. {Those who have spiritually descended from Abraham} are not only those {Jews} who obey the laws {God gave them}, but also those who trust {in God} as Abraham did. Abraham is the {spiritual} ancestor of all of us {who trust in God}. **17**(This is exactly what {God} said in the Scriptures {about Abraham}: "I have chosen you to be a {spiritual} ancestor for numerous people groups.") God considers {Abraham to be our spiritual ancestor}. Abraham trusted God. {God is the one} who causes dead people to become alive {again}. He also commands things that do not exist {to exist}, then they exist. **18**Abraham trusted {in God} by hoping {in God} despite what seemed hopeless. As a result, he became the {spiritual} ancestor for numerous people groups. {This happened} just as God had promised {him} {in the Scriptures}: "The people who descend from you will become as numerous {as the stars in the sky}." **19**Abraham thought that his body was too old to produce children. (He was almost 100 years old!) {He also thought} that {his wife} Sarah was unable to become pregnant {because she never had been able to do so before}. {Nevertheless,} Abraham kept on trusting {God}. **20**Indeed, Abraham did not faithlessly doubt what God had promised. On the contrary, God empowered Abraham to continue trusting {in him} while Abraham was glorifying God. **21**God also totally assured Abraham that he is able to do what he had promised {to do}. **22**And this is why, "God considered Abraham to be righteous because he trusted in him."

23Yet, when {Moses} wrote {in the Scriptures}, "God considered how Abraham trusted {him}," {these words} not only refer to Abraham. **24**On the contrary, {these words} also refer to us {who trust in Jesus}. God is going to consider how we {believers} trust {him}. {We are} the people who trust him. {He is} the one who caused our Lord Jesus to become alive again after he had died. **25**God allowed people to kill Jesus because we sinned {against God}. {God} also caused Jesus to become alive again in order to make us righteous.

Chapter 5

1Consequently, we should live peacefully with God by means of {what} our Lord Jesus the Messiah {did for us} because we have become righteous by trusting {in Jesus}. **2**Our Lord Jesus the Messiah also allows us to continually experience how kind God is by trusting in Jesus. We can confidently boast that we will share in God's glorious status. **3**This is not the only thing {about which we can confidently boast}. Rather, we can also confidently boast about the painful things {that we have experienced}. {We can do this} because we know that a painful thing {that we experience} causes us to endure {hardships better than before}. **4**And being able to endure {hardships} results in {God} approving {us}. And {when God} approves {us, we become more} confident. **5**And when we become confident, we will not be disappointed. {This is} because the Holy Spirit has enabled us to deeply understand {how much} God loves us. God has given us this Holy Spirit.

6In fact, while we were still helpless, {Jesus} the Messiah died for the sake of {us} impious people. {God caused this to happen} at just the right time. **7**Indeed, someone would rarely consider dying for the sake of a person who is righteous, although someone might possibly even bravely consider dying for the sake of a good person. **8**However, God shows his own love towards we {believers} by this fact: while we were still sinful, {Jesus} the Messiah died for our benefit! **9**Consequently, since the Messiah's {sacrificial} death has already made us righteous, it is even more certain that he will rescue us when God {finally} punishes {sinners}! **10**Indeed, God's Son {Jesus} died to reconcile us to God while we were {still} {his} enemies. Therefore, since Jesus has {already} reconciled us to God, it is even more certain that he will rescue us {when God punishes sinners} because he is alive {again}! **11**Now these are not the only things {God does for us}. Rather, we also boast about God by means of {what} our Lord Jesus the Messiah {has done for us}. Jesus has already reconciled us {with God}!

12So then, sin started existing in the world because one man sinned, and {living things started} to die because he sinned. In the same way, everyone started dying as well, because everyone sins. **13**Indeed, people throughout the world sinned before {God gave his} laws {to the Jews}. However, God did not legally regard what they did as sinning, since those laws did not yet exist {to identify what it means to sin}. **14**However, everyone died from {the time of the first man} Adam until {the time of} Moses. Even those people died who did not sin by violating the same command God gave to Adam. Adam is like the person who would come {later}. **15**But what God has kindly given {us} is not the same as how Adam rejected {God's command}. In fact, it is true that many people died because the one man {Adam} rejected {God's command}. {But} how kind God is and that which God kindly gives through the one man Jesus the Messiah extend to many people {and are} much greater! **16**Yet, what God gives is not like {what happened} because the one man {Adam} sinned. {This is true} because, in fact, God judged {everyone} after the sinful thing {that Adam did}, which resulted in God condemning {everyone}. By contrast, what God kindly gave {people} after they rejected {his commands} many {times} resulted in God making them righteous. **17**Indeed, since everyone died because the one man {Adam} rejected {God's command}, it is even more certain that those {people} who accept how abundantly kind God is and {are those people whom} he makes righteous will live in control {of themselves}. {This will happen} because of {what} Jesus the Messiah {has done}.

18Therefore, in the way that God condemned everyone because {Adam} rejected {God's command}, in the same way, God makes everyone righteous, which results in {them} living eternally, because of the righteous act that {Jesus} did. **19**Indeed, in the same way that people became sinful because the one man {Adam} disobeyed {God}, in the same way many people will become righteous because the one man {Jesus} obeyed {God}. **20**Yet {God} added {his} laws in order that people might reject {his commands} even more. Nevertheless, whenever people began to sin even more, then even more God showed how kind he is! **21**{This happened} so that God could be gracious to people by making them righteous. Just as being sinful controlled people by making them die, in the same way, when God makes people righteous, they live forever. {This is} because of {what} our Lord Jesus the Messiah {has done}.

Chapter 6

1{Someone might say,} {"If what you have said is true,} then surely we {believers} should keep on sinning in order that, even more, God might show how kind he is even more!" **2**{Then I would say,} "Of course not!" We who are no longer controlled by sinning surely must not continue living sinfully! **3**You surely know that God unites to the Messiah Jesus whomever someone baptizes, and it is as if that baptized person also died with the Messiah! **4**So, by being baptized as if we died with {the Messiah}, it is like God buried us {in the tomb} with {Jesus}. {This is so} in order that, just as God the Father's glorious power caused the Messiah to become alive again after he had died, in the same way, we too can live a new way of living. **5**Indeed, since we share in what resembles Jesus dying, we will surely also share in God making us alive again. **6**We know that God {also} did away with our former {sinful} way of living when people crucified Jesus. {He did this} in order to totally remove the way sin controls us, so that we no longer have to live sinfully. **7**{This is} because, when people {who live sinfully} share in {Jesus'} death, God frees them from having to live sinfully. **8**Now since {it is as if} we died with the Messiah, we trust that we will also live with him {eternally}. **9**We know that the Messiah can never die again, because God caused him to become alive again after he had died. Nothing can ever cause the Messiah to die again! **10**{This is} because when Jesus died, he only had to die that one time only in order to remove {the way} sin {controls people}. Now that he is alive {again}, he lives in order to glorify God. **11**Similarly, you too regard yourselves as no longer controlled by sinning. Indeed, {regard yourselves} as alive in order to glorify God because God has united you to the Messiah Jesus. **12**Since this is true, do not allow your sinful desires to control you. {This would} result in you doing {the sinful things} that you want to do. **13**Do not use your body parts in order to do unrighteous things {or} to sin. Instead, live in order to do what God wants you to do, like people whom God caused to live again after they had died. Also, use your body parts in order to do righteous things to glorify God. **14**Indeed, do not allow your desire to sin to control you because the laws {God gave the Jews} do not control you. Instead, how kind God is controls you.

15{Someone might say,} {"If what you have said is true,} then surely we {believers} should keep on sinning because the laws {God gave the Jews} do not control us. Instead, how kind God is controls us!" {Then I would say,} "Of course not!" **16**You surely know that if you submit yourselves to be controlled by a thing or person, you become like slaves to that thing or person you submit to! {This is true} whether you submit yourselves to living sinfully, which will kill you {eternally}, or you submit yourselves to God, which will make you righteous. **17**Although you used to submit yourselves to living sinfully, {now} you are sincerely submissive to the type of teaching to which God has submitted you. Thank God! **18**Indeed, since God liberated you from living sinfully, you are {now} serving {God} righteously. **19**(I {Paul} am speaking in human terms, because you are spiritually immature.) Indeed, just as you {previously} used your body parts to live impurely and to increasingly break God's laws, in the same way, now use your body parts to live righteously. {This will cause you} to live like God's people should live. **20**{This is} because when you used to submit yourselves to living sinfully, you were not living righteously. **21**So, formerly you did not benefit from those {sinful} things {you did} that now embarrass you. {This is because} those things will eventually kill {you} {eternally}. **22**But now {that you trust in Jesus}, God has freed you from living sinfully and has caused you to serve him the way slaves would serve him. Therefore, you receive what is beneficial, which results in you living like God's people should live. Indeed, {living in that way} will eventually result in you living eternally. **23**{I say this} because living sinfully causes those who do so to die {eternally}, but God graciously causes those who are united to our Lord, the Messiah Jesus, to live eternally.

Chapter 7

1My fellow {Jewish} believers, you are well-aware that the laws {God gave the Jews} must be obeyed by {Jewish} people throughout their whole lives. ({I know that you are well-aware of this fact}, because I am speaking to people who are familiar with the laws {God gave the Jews}.) **2**For instance, according to the laws {God gave the Jews}, a married woman must remain married to her husband as long as he lives. However, if her husband dies, {God's} law no longer requires her to remain married to him. **3**Therefore, if she marries another man while her husband is alive, {according to God's law} she will be an adulterous woman. However, if her husband dies, she no longer has to

obey {what} God's law {requires of those who are married}. As a result, she would not be an adulterous woman if she married another man. **4**So, my fellow {Jewish} believers, by means of the Messiah dying {on the cross} the laws {God gave the Jews} no longer control you. {God did this} in order to unite you to the Messiah, {as if you were marrying a new husband}. He is the person whom God made alive again after he had died. {God did this} in order that we may do things that please him. **5**Indeed, when living sinfully used to control us, the laws {God gave us} caused us to want to sin even more. {Our living sinfully} controlled what we did with our body parts. As a result, we would {eventually} die {eternally}. **6**But now {that we trust in Jesus}, God cancels what his laws require {us to do}. The laws {God gave the Jews} no longer control us as if we were prisoners. As a result, we now serve God in the new way that comes from the {Holy} Spirit. {We} no longer {serve God} in the old way that the written rules {God gave the Jews} require.

7{Someone might say,} {"If what you have said is true,} then surely the laws {God gave the Jews} are sinful!" {Then I would say,} "Of course not!" On the contrary, without the laws {God gave the Jews}, I would never have become aware of {what it means to} sin. For instance, if God did not say in his laws, "You must not covet," I would never have become aware of {what it means to} covet. **8**However, since I am sinful, I wanted to covet in many ways because I knew that {God} commanded {us not to covet}. {This is} because if the laws {God gave the Jews} did not exist, living sinfully would cease. **9**There was a time when I was living without being aware of the laws {God gave the Jews}. But, when I became aware of those commandments, I wanted to sin even more. **10**I became {spiritually} dead. God's command was supposed to result in me living {eternally}. But God's command actually will result in me dying {eternally}. **11**{This is so} because {I} wanted to sin even more because I knew what God had commanded. When I sinned, I tricked myself. Then {disobeying} what God had commanded killed me {spiritually}. **12**So the laws {God gave the Jews} are worthy of God and what God has commanded is worthy of God, just, and good.

13So, {God's laws}, which are good, surely did not cause me to die {spiritually}! Of course not! Rather, living sinfully did so. {This happened} so that {God's} good {laws} would reveal how sinful it is to live sinfully. {This also happened} so that what God commands would reveal that living sinfully is utterly sinful.

14{This is true} because we are {all} aware that the laws {God gave the Jews} are from God's Spirit. But as for me, I am {spiritually} weak. {It is as if} I must serve as a slave to living sinfully. **15**{This is true} because I do not comprehend what I do! Indeed, I keep on doing what I do not want to do. But I do what I hate {that I do}. **16**Now because I do what I do not want {to do}, {this proves that} I agree with the laws {God gave the Jews}. {I also testify} that they are good {laws}. **17**This means that now I am no longer the one who causes me to do {these sinful things}. Rather, my wanting to live sinfully causes me {to do them}. **18**Indeed, I am aware that I am not good {at all}. In other words, my sinful self {is not good at all}. {This is true} because, even though I really want to do {what is good}, I am unable to do so. **19**Indeed, I do not do the good things I want {to do}. Rather, I keep on doing evil things that I do not want {to do}. **20**Now because I do what I do not want {to do}, I am no longer the one who causes me to do {these sinful things}. Rather, my wanting to live sinfully causes me {to do them}. **21**Consequently, I realized that a principle exists: I keep on doing evil things, {even though} I really want to do good things. **22**{This is true} because the laws God gave {the Jews} make my mind rejoice. **23**Yet, I notice another principle that controls what I do with my body parts. {This principle} conflicts with the {other} principle that my mind {accepts}. It also controls me, making me its prisoner by means of the principle that I tend to live sinfully. {Living sinfully} controls what I do with my body parts. **24**I am truly a wretched person! {I feel as though there is no one} who could {possibly} rescue me from this body that kills me! **25**I thank God {who rescued me} by means of our Lord Jesus the Messiah! Therefore, I actually do obey with my mind the laws God gave {the Jews}. Yet {at the same time} with my sinful self {I obey} the principle that I tend to live sinfully.

Chapter 8

1So now, God absolutely does not condemn anyone whom he has united with the Messiah Jesus. **2**{This is true} because the principle that pertains to the life-giving Holy Spirit has caused you {believers} to no longer be controlled by the principle that causes people to sin and die {eternally}. {It did this} by uniting you with the Messiah

Jesus. **3**Indeed, God {accomplished} what the laws {he gave the Jews} could not accomplish, because they could not prevent people from living sinfully. Through {the crucifying of} {his Son's} body, God removed {how} sinning {controls people}. {He did this} by sending his own Son {Jesus} {to the world} in a human body {that was} like the bodies of sinful people. {God sent his Son} in order to {remove} that which causes man to sin. **4**{God did these things} so that we {believers} could do the righteous acts that the laws {he gave the Jews} required. We can live as people whom living sinfully does not control. Rather, {we can live as people} whom the {Holy} Spirit controls. **5**{This is true} because those {people} whom living sinfully controls think about those things that are related to living sinfully. However, those people whom the {Holy} Spirit controls think about those things that are related to the {Holy} Spirit. **6**Indeed, focusing on living sinfully will cause {a person} to die {eternally}. However, focusing on the {Holy} Spirit will cause {a person} to live {eternally and} peacefully. **7**{This is true} because {people} who focus on living sinfully are God's enemies. {This is} because they do not voluntarily obey the laws God gave {the Jews}; they are incapable {of doing so}. **8**But those whom living sinfully controls are incapable of pleasing God. **9**By contrast, you {believers} are not those whom living sinfully controls. Rather, you are those whom the {Holy} Spirit controls because God's Spirit really does reside within you. But if some person does not possess Jesus the Messiah's Spirit, this person does not belong to the Messiah. **10**Now, since the Messiah resides within you {believers}, the {Holy} Spirit gives {you} {eternal} life because he has made you righteous. {This is true} even though your bodies will die because you sin. **11**The {Holy} Spirit does indeed reside within you. {He came} from God, who caused Jesus to become alive again after he had died. {Since this is true,} God, who caused the Messiah Jesus to become alive again after he had died, will also cause your physical bodies to become alive {again} by his Spirit. This {Spirit} resides within you.

12Therefore, {my} fellow believers, we are obligated. {But we are not obligated} to live sinfully, {which means} to live like those whom living sinfully controls. **13**Indeed, if you live like those whom living sinfully controls, you will die {eternally}. However, if the {Holy} Spirit enables you to stop doing what is sinful with your bodies, you will live {eternally}.

14{This is} because those people whom God's Spirit guides are God's {spiritual} children. **15**Indeed, God has not given you {believers} an enslaved mind to terrify you, such as you had before. Rather, God has given you the Holy Spirit to {spiritually} adopt you {as his children}. {It is} the Holy Spirit who enables us to cry out, "Abba, my Father!" **16**The {Holy} Spirit personally testifies, along with our own minds, that we are God's {spiritual} children. **17**Since we are {God's spiritual} children, we are also those who will inherit {blessings from God}. We inherit {blessings from God himself} and also together with the Messiah {Jesus}. {This is true} only if we keep suffering together with the Messiah in order for God to also glorify us together with the Messiah.

18Indeed, I regard what we {believers in the Messiah} suffer at this time as being incomparable to what glorious things God will reveal to us {in the future}. **19**Indeed, what God created is very eagerly waiting for {the time} when God reveals whom his {spiritual} children are. **20**{This is} because God subjugated what he created so that it became useless. {What God created} did not want this to happen. Rather, {God subjugated what he created} because he wanted to {do so}. {He did this} to keep {the creation} confidently expecting **21**that God would also enable what he created to stop decaying and let it freely experience the same glorious status that belongs to his {spiritual} children. **22**Indeed, we are aware that, {even} at the present time, everything God has created keeps groaning and suffering together {like a mother experiencing pain before bearing a child}. **23**{It is} not only {what God created that groans}! On the contrary, even we ourselves who possess the {Holy} Spirit as the first portion {from God} feel suffering. {We feel this way} while we eagerly wait for God to {spiritually} adopt us, which will be when God redeems our bodies. **24**{This is so} because God rescued us while we confidently expect this. If we {already} had what we have been confidently expecting, then we would have nothing to confidently expect. {This is} because surely nobody confidently expects something that he {already} has. **25**Yet, if we keep on confidently expecting what we do not yet have, then we will keep on eagerly waiting for it while persevering.

26The {Holy} Spirit similarly also assists us because we are weak. {This is} because we are not aware for what we should pray. However, the {Holy} Spirit personally pleads on our behalf by groaning without speaking words. **27**Now God is the one who investigates what we think and feel. He is aware of what the {Holy} Spirit intends, because the Spirit pleads for the sake of God's people according to {what} God {wants}.

28We are certain that God makes all things that happen to benefit those who love him. {They are} the people whom God called because he previously planned {to do so}. **29**{This is} because those whom God chose in advance, he also decided in advance to make resemble his Son {Jesus}. {God did these things} in order for his Son {Jesus} to have first place among many {spiritual} siblings. **30**Certainly, the people whom God chose in advance {to become his people}, he also summoned to become his people. And those people whom God summoned {to become his people}, he also made righteous. And those people whom God made righteous, he will also make glorious.

31{Since these things are true,} then we should say this about them: since God supports us, surely no one {is powerful enough} to oppose us! **32**God did not even spare his own Son, {Jesus}. On the contrary, God handed him over {to die} for the sake of us all. So God surely will also graciously give us, along with Jesus, every {blessing}! **33**Surely no one can {rightly} accuse those whom God chose {to become his people}! {This is because} God is the one who makes people righteous. **34**Surely no one can condemn {God's people}! {This is because} the Messiah Jesus is the one who died. Furthermore, he is the one whom God made alive again. He is also at the place of highest honor next to God, and he even pleads for our sake. **35**Surely no one can make Jesus stop loving us! If people trouble us or distress us or persecute us, or if we are hungry or naked or in danger, or if people kill us with swords, surely none of those things can make Jesus stop loving us! **36**This is what {God meant when} he said {in the Scriptures}, "They constantly kill us because of you{, God}. They consider us to be like sheep for them to slaughter." **37**However, he who loved us enables us to completely overcome all of these things {that might happen to us}. **38**In fact, God has persuaded me that {none of these things}—whether being dead, or what happens while we are alive, or angels, or demons who rule, or things that are happening to us, or things that will happen to us, or powerful demons, **39**or what is above {us}, or what is below {us}, or anything else that God created—can stop God from loving us! {God loves us} because we are united to the Messiah Jesus, our Lord!

Chapter 9

1I speak what is true as one whom God has united with the Messiah. I do not speak what is false. The Holy Spirit confirms what my conscience testifies within myself {when I say} **2**that I grieve very greatly and constantly! **3**{I do so} because I truly wish that God would curse me and completely alienate me from {Jesus} the Messiah for my fellow {kinsmen} {to be saved}! They are physically related to me. **4**These {kinsmen of mine} are the Israelites. {They are those} whom God {spiritually} adopted. God allowed them to experience how glorious he is. God made covenants with them. God gave them his laws. God gave them the way to worship him. God also made promises to them. **5**{Our Jewish} forefathers {Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob} were Israelites. The Messiah is also one of them, as someone physically related to them. The Messiah rules over everything. {He is} the blessed God forever. May it be so!

6Yet God has not failed to do what he promised {to the Israelites}. {This is true} because not all people who have physically descended from Israel are {true} Israelites. **7**{It is} also not {true} that all those who physically descended {from Abraham} are Abraham's {true} offspring. Rather, {as God says to Abraham in the Scriptures,} "I will identify your {true} offspring through {those who descend from} Isaac." **8**In other words, the people who {only} physically descended {from Abraham} are not God's {spiritual} children. Rather, those {who became God's spiritual} children as a result of what God promised are regarded as {Abraham's true spiritual} offspring. **9**Indeed, this is what God promised {would happen} {when he said in the Scriptures}, "At a set time, I will come. As a result, Sarah will give birth to a son." **10**This is not the only {promise God made}. But {God made a promise} also when Rebekah became pregnant by this same man, Isaac. {He is} the ancestor of us {Israelites}. **11**Indeed, {God chose only one of her two sons} even though she had not yet born them and they had not yet done anything right or wrong. {God did this} in order that what he had previously planned with regard to choosing {people} would happen. **12**{God did not choose only one of her sons} because of what he did. Rather, it was because God summons {those whom he chooses}. {This is why} God told Rebekah {in the Scriptures}, "Your older son will become a slave to your younger son." **13**This is what {God meant when} he said {in the Scriptures}, "I love {the younger son} Jacob, but I emphatically reject {the older son} Esau."

14{Someone might say,} {“If what you have said is true,} then surely God must be unrighteous!” {Then I would say,} “Of course not!” **15**{We know that God is truly righteous} because God told Moses {in the Scriptures}, “I will be merciful to whomever I want to be merciful. I will be compassionate to whomever I want to be compassionate.” **16**Therefore, {who receives God’s mercy does} not {depend} on {how much} someone desires {to receive it}. {Who receives God’s mercy} also does not depend on {how much} effort someone exerts. Rather, {it depends on} what God wants. {He is} the one who is merciful. **17**Indeed, this is what God told Pharaoh in the Scriptures, “I allowed you {to become king in Egypt} for this exact reason: in order that I could use you to exhibit how powerful I am. I also {allowed you to become king} in order that I will be famous all over the world.” **18**Therefore, God is merciful to whomever he wants {to be merciful}. But he makes stubborn whomever he wants {to become stubborn}.

19As a result {of what I have said,} one of you may tell me, “{If what you have said is true,} then surely God should not blame people {for doing what they do}! {God should not do that} because no one can ever stop him from doing whatever he wants {to do}!” **20**{Then I would say,} “You {mere} human! You who argue with God are truly not worthy {to do so}! Who God has made surely must not say to God who made him, ‘You should not have made me to be like this!’” **21**{God can surely do whatever he wants to do with what he has made. In the same way,} someone who makes containers can do whatever he wants to do with his materials. From the same material he can make both containers for special use and containers for ordinary use. **22**Now, {you should surely not argue with God} because he very patiently endured those people whom he would punish {and} had prepared to destroy {eternally}. {He endured them} because he wanted to show how angry he is and to reveal how powerful he is. **23**{God} also {endures those whom he will punish} in order to reveal how abundantly glorious he is to those people to whom he will be merciful. God has previously arranged to glorify these people {eternally}. **24**We are also {among those people to whom God is merciful and} whom God has summoned. {God summons people} from {among} Jewish people and even from {among} non-Jewish people. **25**In the same way, God also told Hosea {in the Scriptures}, “I will give the name ‘My people’ to people who were not my people. I will also give the name ‘Loved one’ to the person whom I did not love.”

26{God also told Hosea,} “Then it will happen, in the {exact} same location where I previously told them, ‘You are not my people,’ I will give them the name, ‘Children of God who lives.’”

27Indeed, {elsewhere in the Scriptures} Isaiah shouts out about {the people} of Israel, “Even though there were as many Israelites as there are grains of sand along the seashore, God will refrain from punishing {only} a few of them. **28**{This is} because the Lord will fully and swiftly accomplish what he promised {to do} on the earth.”

29{It is} also just like Isaiah previously said {in the Scriptures}, “Unless the Lord, who rules over angel armies, had preserved offspring for us {Israelites}, he would have utterly destroyed us like he destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.”

30{Since these things are true}, we should surely say that {although} the nations are not trying to be righteous, {they} became righteous. {However,} they became righteous by trusting {God}. **31**By contrast, {the people of} Israel tried to obey the laws {God gave them} in order to become righteous. {But} they could not become righteous by {obeying} those laws. **32**The reason why {the people of Israel could not become righteous} is that they did not {try to become righteous} by trusting {God}. Instead, they tried to become righteous by working {for it}. {Because of this} {the Messiah offended them when he came}. It is as if the Messiah is} a stone that causes them to trip. **33**This is what {God meant when} he had {Isaiah} write {in the Scriptures}, “Pay attention! I am placing in Jerusalem {someone who is like} a stone that trips {people} and a rock that offends {people}. But God will not humiliate {anyone} who trusts in that person.”

Chapter 10

1My fellow believers, I strongly desire {that God will save the Israelites}. I also pray for him {to save} them! **2**{This is} because I personally confirm that they are zealous about God. However, {they are} not {zealous} based on fully knowing {God}. **3**{This is} because they are not aware of how God makes people righteous, and they try to make

themselves righteous. {This is why} they refuse to subject themselves to the way God makes people righteous.
4{They were wrong to try to make themselves righteous}, because {Jesus} the Messiah has ended the laws {that God gave the Jews}. {Christ did this} in order for God to make righteous anyone who trusts {in Jesus}.

5Indeed, this is what Moses wrote {in the Scriptures} about being righteous by {obeying} the laws {God gave the Jews}: "The person who obeys {all} {God's} laws {perfectly} will live {eternally} by doing so." **6**However, this is what {Moses} said {in the Scriptures} about people becoming righteous by trusting {in God}, "Do not say to yourselves, 'Surely no one can go up to heaven!'" (This refers to trying to make the Messiah come down {to the earth}.)
7{Moses} also {said not to say,} "Surely no one can go down into the bottomless pit!" (This refers to trying to make the Messiah become alive again after he had died.) **8**However, {Moses also} said this {in the Scriptures} {about people becoming righteous by trusting in God}, "You can easily know what God said. You can proclaim it and know it personally." This refers to what God said about trusting {in him}. {This is what} we {believers in the Messiah} keep announcing. **9**{What we keep announcing is} that God will save {any of} you who verbally acknowledges that Jesus is the Lord {over all things} and {personally} trusts that God made Jesus become alive again after he had died.
10{This is true} because God makes righteous anyone who personally trusts {in Jesus}, and he saves anyone who verbally acknowledges {that Jesus is the Lord}. **11**Indeed, this is {what God} said in the Scriptures, "God will not humiliate {anyone} who trusts in that person." **12**Indeed, the Lord {Jesus} does not discriminate between Jewish people and non-Jewish people. {This is} because {Jesus} is the same Lord {who rules} over everyone. He generously blesses all people who call out to him {to save them}. **13**Indeed, {Joel wrote in the Scriptures,} "God will save all people who call out to the Lord {to save them}."

14So, people certainly will not call out {for the Lord Jesus to save them} {if} they do not trust {in him}. And people certainly will not trust {in Jesus} {if} they have not heard {about him}. And people certainly will not hear {about Jesus} {if} someone does not proclaim {to them who he is}. **15**And certainly people would not proclaim {to other people who Jesus is} unless someone sends them out! This is what {Isaiah meant when} he wrote {in the Scriptures}, "It is a beautiful thing when people go and declare {to other people} the good news about good things!" **16**However, not all {Jews} accepted the good news {about Jesus}. Indeed, this is what Isaiah {meant when} he said {in the Scriptures}, "Lord, no one trusts what we say!" **17**So then, {a person can only} trust {in Jesus} by hearing {about him}. And {a person can only} hear {about Jesus} through {hearing} the message {that is about} the Messiah. **18**However, this is what I say, "The Jews most definitely heard {the message}!" It is a fact. {As David wrote in the Scriptures,} "{The heavenly bodies are like witnesses and} everyone throughout the entire world could hear what they said."

19This is also what I say, "{The people of} Israel most definitely understood {the message}!" {God} first said through Moses {in the Scriptures}, "I will {personally} make you envious and angry by {using} a nation that does not {belong to me} and does not {even} know {me}." **20**Moreover, {God} quite boldly declared through Isaiah {in the Scriptures}, "I revealed myself to those {non-Jewish people} who were not interested in knowing me and did not {even} ask about me."

21However, {God} told {the people of} Israel {in the Scriptures}, "I am always inviting {you} to know me, {but you} {constantly} disobey and oppose {me}!"

Chapter 11

1Since {these things are true}, this is what I say, "God certainly has not rejected his people, the Israelites!" Of course not! {I know this is true} because I too am one of the Israelites. I descended from Abraham. {More specifically, I descended} from the tribe that descended from Benjamin. **2**God did not discard his people. {They are the people} whom he chose in advance. You certainly are aware of what the Prophet Elijah said in the Scriptures when he appealed to God against the people of Israel! **3**{Elijah said,} "Lord, the people of Israel murdered {all of} your prophets {except for me}! They demolished {all of} your altars! I am the very last {prophet} who is still alive! Now, they are trying to kill me {too}!" **4**However, this is how God replied to Elijah, "I have kept alive 7,000 men for my purposes. These men have not worshipped {the false god} Baal." **5**So, similarly, at this time some faithful Israelites

also remain. {This is} because God has graciously chosen them {to remain}. **6**Yet because {God chooses his people} based on how gracious he is, {God} does not {choose his people} based on what they do. {If God chose people based on what they do,} then how gracious he is would not {really} be gracious.

7So this is what we should conclude: Although {the people of} Israel keep trying to make themselves righteous, they cannot do so. Instead, those whom God {graciously} chose {from them} became righteous. But God made stubborn those people of Israel whom he did not {graciously} choose. **8**This is exactly {what God meant when he wrote} in the Scriptures, "God caused the people of Israel to not think properly. Until this present day, God has made them completely unable to understand {how to become righteous}." **9**David also stated {in the Scriptures}, "{O God}, make the luxurious way they live punish them completely {like a hunter catches an animal} in a net or trap! {Make the luxurious way they live} cause them to sin and pay them back {for sinning}!

10Make them unable to understand! Make them suffer like slaves forever!"

11Since {these things are true}, this is what I say, "The Jewish people were certainly not offended in order that God would completely reject them!" Of course not! Rather, God saves non-Jewish people because the Jewish people disobeyed {him}. This happened in order for God to make the Jewish people envious {of non-Jewish people who know him}. **12**Indeed, God used how the Jewish people disobeyed {him and} failed {to make themselves righteous} to abundantly bless people from all the nations in the whole world. So, {when} the complete amount of {faithful} Jewish people {become righteous}, there will be even greater blessings!

13But now I am speaking to you {non-Jewish people who trust in Jesus}. God indeed made me his representative to non-Jewish people. Therefore, I show how glorious is what I do to minister {to non-Jewish people}. **14**If possible, I want to make those who I am physically related to, the Jews, envious {of the non-Jewish people who know God}, so that God will save some of them. **15**Indeed, God is reconciling with {people in} the world as a result of him rejecting the Jewish people. So, when God accepts the Jewish people, it will result in God making alive those who are dead. **16**Indeed, because {the ancestors of the Jewish people belong to God, just like} the first portion {of a lump of dough} belongs to God, {all the Jewish people belong to God, just like} that whole lump of dough {belongs to God}. Also, because {the ancestors of the Jewish people belonged to God, just like} the root {of an olive tree} belongs to God, {all the Jewish people belong to God, just like} the branches of that {same} tree {belong to God}.

17Indeed, {God has removed some of the Jewish people from his people, as} a farmer breaks {unfruitful} branches off {of an olive tree}. But, {God has made} you {non-Jewish people who trust in Jesus} {part of his people, as} a farmer grafts wild olive branches into {a cultivated tree}. {You} also {share together in benefitting from being part of God's people, as} grafted branches share in the nutrition in the olive tree root. **18**Therefore, you {non-Jewish people who trust in Jesus} must not boast against the {Jewish people whom God removed, even though they are like} broken off branches! If you do boast, {you must realize that} you indeed do not sustain the Jewish people. Rather, {they sustain} you, as the root sustains {the branches}! **19**So then, you might say, "{God removed some of the Jewish people from his people, as} a farmer breaks {unfruitful} branches off {of a tree}. {God did this} in order that {he could join} me {to his people, as} a farmer grafts a branch into {a tree}." **20**{I would reply by saying that} what you said is correct. {God removed} some of the Jewish people {from being his people, as} a farmer breaks off {unfruitful} branches because they were unfaithful. However, you {non-Jewish people who trust in Jesus} remain {part of God's people} by trusting {in him}. Do not arrogantly think {that you are better than unbelieving Jewish people}! Rather, fear {God!} **21**{You should fear God} because he did not show pity to the {faithless Jewish people, who are like} natural branches. So, he will not show pity to you {non-Jewish people} {if you stop trusting in Jesus}!

22Since {this is true}, pay attention to how kind and severe God can be! God acts severely toward those who stop trusting in him. However, God will act kindly toward you {non-Jewish people who trust in Jesus} if you continue accepting how kind he is. But, if you do not {do this}, {God will reject you, like} a farmer cuts an {unfruitful} branch off of a tree! **23**However, if those faithless Jewish people believe {in Jesus}, God will allow them to {rejoin his people, just as} a farmer grafts {branches} into {a tree}. {This is} because God is powerful enough to rejoin the Jewish people {to his people}. **24**Indeed, {God removed} you {non-Jewish people who trust in Jesus from the nations and joined you to his people, as} a farmer cuts off a branch from a naturally wild olive tree and grafts it into a cultivated

olive tree, {even though doing so is} not natural. Since {this is true}, {God} will certainly {join Israelites back into his people, just as} a farmer grafts a naturally cultivated olive branch back into its own tree.

25{I say this} because I really want you, my {non-Jewish} fellow believers, to know what God had previously hidden {from people}, so that you do not become arrogant. {God had previously hidden from people the fact} that some of {the people of} Israel will stubbornly oppose {him} until all the non-Jewish people God has chosen have joined his people. **26**Then, in the same way, God will save all {of the people of} Israel. This is what {Isaiah meant when} he wrote {in the Scriptures}, "God will send from Jerusalem someone to rescue {his people}. {That man} will make {the descendants of} Jacob stop being ungodly."

27{God says,} "This is the agreement that I will make with the descendants of Jacob, when I forgive {them for the} sinful things {that they have done}."

28With regard to {Jewish people rejecting} the good news, they are enemies {of God} for your benefit. However, with regard to {God} choosing {Jewish people}, God loves them for the sake of {what he promised} their ancestors. **29**{This is true} because God does not revoke the things he graciously gives. {He} also {does not revoke} {the people whom} he summons {to be his people}. **30**Indeed, {it is} just as you {non-Jewish people who trust in Jesus} used to disobey God, but now God has been merciful to you because the Jewish people disobeyed {him}. **31**In the same way, the Jewish people also are now disobeying {God} because God has been merciful to you {non-Jewish people}. {This happened} in order for God to now also be merciful to them. **32**Indeed, God allowed everyone to disobey him in order to be merciful to them.

33God is so very wealthy, wise, and knowledgeable! No one can fully understand what he does! **34**Indeed, {as Isaiah wrote,} "{No one} could {ever} comprehend what the Lord thinks or advise him!" **35**Furthermore, "No one could {ever} give God {anything} that would cause God to owe him {something}!"

36{No one can do these things}, because everything {came} from God, {exists} by God, and {exists} for God. {I pray that} everyone will glorify him forever. May this truly be so!

Chapter 12

1So then, {considering everything that I have told you,} I exhort you fellow believers, based on how compassionate God is: Devote yourselves {to God}, as if you were living animals someone offers to God. Be holy and please God. Doing so is the reasonable way for you to serve {God}. **2**Do not change yourselves to be like the {sinful people who live at} the current time. Rather, let God change the way you behave by changing the way you think in order that you can test and prove what God wants {you to do}. {God wants you to do} what is good, pleasing, and flawless.

3Indeed, based on {how} God has kindly authorized me {to represent him,} I am telling every one of you to not think you are better than you really are. Rather, think properly {about yourselves}, according to the amount of trusting {in God} that God has apportioned to each one {of you}. **4**{You must think properly about yourselves} because, in the same way that a {human} body has many parts that all function for different purposes, **5**so also, we many {believers in the Messiah} are united to the Messiah as one group. {Each one of us is united to each other like} the individual parts {of a human body} are united. **6**Yet we {believers in the Messiah} have received different spiritual abilities in accordance with what God has kindly given to us. If {God has enabled you} to prophesy, {then prophesy} in accordance with the amount of trusting {in God} that God has apportioned to you. **7**If {God has enabled you} to serve, {then you should} serve {others}. {If God has enabled you} to teach {others}, {then you should} teach {others}. **8**If {God has enabled you} to encourage {others}, {then} you should encourage {others. If God has enabled you} to give {what you have to others}, {then} you should generously give {what you have to others}. {If God has enabled you} to lead {others}, {then} you should lead {others} diligently. {If God has enabled you} to be merciful, {then} you should cheerfully be merciful.

9Love {each other} genuinely. Detest what is wicked. Fervently retain what is good. **10**Be affectionate toward each other in regard to loving fellow believers. Be the first to honor other {fellow believers}. **11**Do not be lazy, {but} be

diligent. Be sincerely enthusiastic. Serve the Lord. **12**Rejoice because you are confident {in the Lord}. Be patient when you suffer. Pray persistently. **13**Share {what you have} {to provide} what God's people need. Find opportunities to welcome {others into your home}. **14**{Ask God to} bless the people who mistreat you. {Ask God to} bless them rather than curse them. **15**Rejoice along with those people who are rejoicing. Cry along with those who are crying. **16**Be as concerned for each other as you are for yourselves. Do not think arrogantly {about yourselves}. Rather, associate with humble people. Do not be arrogant. **17**Do not do something evil to someone who has done something evil to you. Think carefully about {doing} things that everyone considers to be good. **18**Live peacefully with everyone whenever it is possible for you to do so. **19**{Fellow believers} whom I love, do not retaliate {when people do something evil against you}. Rather, let God punish {them}. {I say this} because Moses wrote {in the Scriptures}, "The Lord says, 'I will retaliate {when people do something evil against you}. I will punish {them according to what they have done}.'" **20**Rather {than permitting us to retaliate, God instructed us in the Scriptures}, "Feed your enemy if that person is hungry. Give your enemy something to drink if that person is thirsty. {Do this} because when you do so, {your enemy will feel ashamed, as if} you were piling up burning coals on top of that person's head." **21**{In other words,} do not let what is evil defeat you {by causing you to do what is evil}. Rather, defeat what is evil by {doing} what is good.

Chapter 13

1Every one of you must submit yourselves to those whom God has authorized to govern you. {This is} because no one {can govern} unless God authorizes them {to do so}. God has instituted the existing governments. **2**So people who resist those whom God has authorized {to govern} are opposing what God has commanded. God will punish those people who oppose {those whom he has authorized to govern}. **3**Indeed, the people who rule are {not supposed} to terrify {those people who do} what is good. Rather, {they are supposed to terrify} {those people who do} what is evil. If you do not want to fear those whom God authorizes to rule, {then} do what is good and those who rule will commend you for doing so. **4**{This is} because the people {whom God authorizes to rule} serve God for your benefit. But if you do what is evil, you should be afraid, because God has authorized those people who rule to punish {people} for a good reason. Indeed, those people who rule serve God by avenging {what is evil} in order to punish anyone who practices what is evil. **5**Consequently, you must submit yourselves {to those people whom God authorizes to rule}. {You must do this} not only because they can punish you, but also because you know {that to disobey them is to disobey God}! **6**Indeed, you also pay taxes because of these things. {You also pay taxes} because those people {whom God authorizes to rule} serve God. They devote themselves to serving {by governing}. **7**Give to everyone what you owe them: Pay taxes to whom you owe taxes. Pay fees to whom you owe fees. Fear those people whom you should fear. Honor those people whom you should honor.

8Do not owe anything to anyone. Rather, continue to love other {people who believe in the Messiah} {as if you owe it to them}. {Do this} because someone who loves another person accomplishes {what God required in} the laws {he gave the Jews}. **9**{This is true} because {God commanded} these things {in his laws when he said}, "Do not have sexual relations with someone whom you did not marry. Do not murder. Do not rob people. Do not lust for what belongs to other people." You could summarize anything else that God commands {in the laws he gave the Jews} with this {other} thing {God commanded}: "Love other people in the same way you love yourself." **10**{When you} love other people, {you} do not do evil things {to them}. This is why loving {other people} accomplishes {what God required in} the laws {he gave the Jews}.

11{Do} these things because you know what time it is. It is already the time for you to be spiritually alert because {the time when Jesus will return} to {finally} save us is now closer than when we began trusting {in him}. **12**{In the same way that} the night ends just before the day begins{, the time of this sinful world is almost over, and Jesus will return soon}. So, we must stop doing {what is evil, which is like} what people do when it is dark. Instead, we must {oppose what is evil by doing what is good, which is like} a soldier puts on his armor {to fight the enemy} during the day. **13**We must behave appropriately, as if it were daytime {and people could see what we do}. We must not celebrate drunkenly or get drunk {at all}. We must not do any unrestrained sexually immoral acts {at all}. We must

not quarrel {with others} or be jealous {of others}. **14**Rather {than doing those things}, act like the Lord Jesus the Messiah would act. Do not concern yourselves with {anything that is related to} what your {sinful} self wants to do.

Chapter 14

1Welcome any fellow {believer in the Messiah} who is immature in how they believe. {Do} not {welcome them} in order to argue with them about matters of opinion. **2**{There are some people} who are convinced that they can eat any {kind of food}. But the immature {believer in the Messiah} {thinks that they can only} eat vegetables. **3**{The believer in the Messiah} who eats {every kind of food} must not scorn {his fellow believer} who does not eat {every kind of food. The believer in the Messiah} who does not eat {every kind of food} also must not judge {his fellow believer} who eats {every kind of food}. {This is} because God has welcomed {both of} them. **4**You should not judge {your fellow believer, who is like} a slave belonging to another {master}. He either pleases or does not please his master, {according to how the master judges}. Yet God will make him pleasing {to himself} because the Lord can do so.

5Some people consider certain days to be special, while other people consider all days {to be the same}. Each person must be completely certain {that what they do honors God}. **6**The person who thinks certain days are special does so in order to {honor} the Lord. The person who eats {every kind of food} does so in order to {honor} the Lord. {This is} because that person is thankful to God. The person who refuses to eat {certain foods} does so in order to {honor} the Lord. That person is thankful to God as well. **7**{This is true} because not one of us {believers in the Messiah} lives {only} to {please} himself, and not one of us dies {only} to {please} himself. **8**Indeed, while we {believers in the Messiah} live, we live to {please} the Lord. When we die, we die to {please} the Lord. So then, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. **9**Indeed, this is why the Messiah {Jesus} died and {became} alive {again}: in order to become Lord over those who are dead and those who are alive.

10As for you, those of you who judge your fellow believers must not do so! You also must not scorn your fellow believers! {Do not do these things} because {one day} God will judge all of us {who believe in the Messiah}. **11**Indeed, Isaiah wrote in the Scriptures, “The Lord says {this oath}, ‘As certainly as I am alive, {it is just as certain that} everyone will worship me. And everyone will acknowledge to me {that I am God}.’”

12Therefore, each one of us {who believes in the Messiah} will certainly answer to God for whatever we do {while we are alive}.

13So we must stop judging other believers. Instead, we must resolve not to do anything that could tempt our fellow believers to sin. **14**I am absolutely convinced by the Lord Jesus that no {food} is inherently sinful {for believers in the Messiah to eat}. If someone regards some {food} as sinful to eat, then it is {only} sinful for that person to eat it. **15**{Do not tempt fellow believers to sin} because, if you grieve your fellow believer by eating what that person considers to be sinful to eat, you are not acting in a loving manner anymore. Do not cause a fellow believer to {stop trusting in God and} become ruined {eternally} because of what you {want to} eat! The Messiah died to save that person! **16**So then, do not do anything that will cause anyone to slander the good things that God has given you. **17**{Do not do this}, because eating and drinking do not characterize God’s kingdom. Rather, being righteous, peaceful, and joyful through the Holy Spirit {characterizes God’s kingdom}. **18**Indeed, {any} believer who serves the Messiah by doing these things greatly pleases God, and {other} people will {also} approve of that person.

19Therefore, we must eagerly try to live peacefully {with other believers} and help each other become {spiritually} mature. **20**Do not ruin what God has done because {you want to eat certain} foods! God permits us to eat all {kinds of food}. However, it is sinful for someone to eat {certain foods} if doing so tempts {your fellow believer} to sin. **21**It is better not to eat {any} meat, or drink {any} wine, or {do} anything that could tempt your fellow believer to sin, [or that could offend that person or cause that person to remain spiritually immature]. **22**Keep what you believe {that God permits you to do} between you and God. The person who does not feel guilty concerning what he believes to be right is blessed. **23**By contrast, God judges someone who considers {eating certain foods to be sinful} and eats

{those foods}. {This is} because that person did not act according to what that person believes {is right}. A person who does anything that is not according to what that person believes {is right} is sinning.

Chapter 15

1Indeed, we {spiritually} mature {believers in the Messiah} must support {our} fellow believers in the Messiah who are {spiritually} immature. We must not {only} do what pleases us. **2**Each one of us believers in the Messiah must do what pleases his fellow believers in order to do what is good {for them, and} in order to help them become {spiritually} mature. **3**For instance, not even the Messiah {Jesus} pleased himself! Rather, {he lived to please others}. This is what {David meant when} he wrote {in the Scriptures about the Messiah saying to God}, “When people insult you, they {also} insult me!” **4**Indeed, the prophets previously wrote everything {in the Scriptures} in order to teach us. {They also wrote the Scriptures} in order to make us confident through what the Scriptures say that helps us endure and encourages us.

5I pray that {our} patient and encouraging God will allow you to live harmoniously with each other the way the Messiah Jesus did. **6**{I pray that you will live harmoniously with each other} in order that you might be united when you glorify God. {He is} the Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah.

7Consequently, welcome your fellow believers {in the Messiah} in the same way that the Messiah {Jesus} also welcomed you in order to glorify God! **8**Indeed, I{, Paul,} am telling {you} that the Messiah {Jesus} serves the circumcised {Jews} because of how trustworthy God is. {He did this} in order to secure what God had promised to the {Jewish} forefathers {Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob}. **9**{Jesus also did this} in order for the nations to glorify God because he is so merciful. This is what {David meant when} he wrote {in the Scriptures}, “So I will proclaim {who} you {are} {when I am} among the nations, and I will praise you by singing songs.” **10**Again, {Moses} said in the Scriptures, “{All you} nations, celebrate along with God’s people!” **11**And also {in the Scriptures someone said}, “All {you} nations, praise the Lord! All {you} people groups, commend him!” **12**{The Prophet} Isaiah also said {in the Scriptures}, “The one who descends from {David’s father} Jesse will come. He will begin to rule over the nations. The nations will become confident because of him.”

13I pray that the God who makes {people} confident will cause you to feel exceedingly joyful and peaceful by trusting {in him}! {I pray that God will do this} in order for you to be exceedingly confident by the Holy Spirit enabling you.

14My fellow believers, God has also persuaded me personally that each of you are exceedingly good, exceedingly knowledgeable of many things, and even able to teach other people. **15**{In this letter} I have written to you {believers in the Messiah} in a bold manner about some things in order to remind you {of them}. {I have done this} because God has kindly authorized me {to do so}. **16**{God did this} in order for me to serve the Messiah Jesus among non-Jewish people {by preaching} the good news from God as if I were a priest. {I do this} in order for the non-Jewish people {who trust in Jesus} to be {like} something offered {to God that} pleases {him, and that} the Holy Spirit has set apart {for him}.

17So, as someone who is united with the Messiah Jesus, I have {good reasons} to boast about what God is doing {through me}! **18**Indeed, I will only be so bold as to speak about what the Messiah has done through me {that has led} to the nations obediently {trusting in God’s good news}! {The Messiah did this} through what I said and did. **19**{The Messiah also did this} through powerful and wonderful miracles as God’s {Holy} Spirit powerfully {enabled me}! As a result, I have completed proclaiming the good news about the Messiah all the way around from Jerusalem to the {province of} Illyricum. **20**And so, I aspire to preach the good news where people have never heard about the Messiah {Jesus}. {I desire this} in order to not {interfere with someone else’s work, as if I were} building something where another person had already laid the foundation. **21**Rather, {I preach the good news to those who have never heard it.} This is what {Isaiah meant when} he wrote {in the Scriptures}, “Those people whom no one told about him will perceive {who he is}. Those people who have not heard {about him} will comprehend {who he is}.”

22That also hindered me over and over again from visiting all of you {at Rome}. **23**Yet at the present time I have nowhere left to go in these areas {to proclaim the good news}. I also have deeply desired to visit you for many years. **24**{So} whenever I go to {the province of} Spain, I truly expect to visit you while passing through {Rome}. {I} also {expect} you to help me continue my journey to Spain after I first enjoy being with you for some time. **25**Yet, at the present time I am going to Jerusalem in order to serve God's people {there}. **26**{I am doing this} because {the believers in} the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia were glad to give money to help the poor people of God {who live} in Jerusalem. **27**In fact, those believers were glad, and they should {help} the poor believers in Jerusalem. {This is} because the non-Jewish believers have spiritually benefited from the Jewish believers. {So,} the non-Jewish believers should also serve the Jewish believers by providing what they physically need. **28**So then, after I finish this task and safely deliver this money to the poor believers in Jerusalem, I will pass through {your city} on my way to Spain. **29**I am certain that the Messiah will fully bless {us} when I visit you!

30Fellow believers, I appeal to you based on our Lord Jesus the Messiah and how the {Holy} Spirit has enabled us to love {each other}: Fervently pray to God with me {and} for me! **31**{Pray} that God will rescue me from the Jews in the province of Judea who do not believe {in Jesus}. {Pray} also that God's people in Jerusalem will accept the money that I give them for {the poor believers there}. **32**{Pray also} that I can joyfully visit you as God wants, {and} we may refresh each other. **33**Finally, {I pray that} the God who makes {us} peaceful will be with all of you. May it be so!

Chapter 16

1I, {Paul,} recommend to you our fellow believer whose name is Phoebe. She also serves the group of believers {that meets} in the city of Cenchrea. **2**{I recommend Phoebe to you} in order for you to accept her {as a fellow believer} in the Lord {Jesus}. {Accept her} in a way that is appropriate for God's people. {I} also {recommend her to you in order for you} to help her in whatever way and with anything she might need from you. {Do this} because she has helped many people, including me personally.

3Say hello to Priscilla and {her husband} Aquila. They have worked with me {to tell people} about the Messiah Jesus. **4**They risked {the Romans} executing them in order to save my life. Both I and all the groups of believers among the nations are thankful for them. **5**Also, {say hello to} the group of believers {that meets} in the home of Priscilla and Aquila. Say hello to Epaenetus, whom I love. He is the first person from the province of Asia {Minor} to believe in the Messiah {Jesus}. **6**Say hello to Mary. She has labored a lot for your sake. **7**Say hello to Andronicus and Junia. They are my fellow Jews, and we were in prison together. Those whom Jesus sent to represent him know them very well. God united them to the Messiah before {he did so to} me. **8**Say hello to Ampliatus. I love him {as a fellow believer} in the Lord {Jesus}. **9**Say hello to Urbanus. He works with us {to tell people} about the Messiah {Jesus}. Also say hello to Stachys, whom I love. **10**Say hello to Apelles. The Messiah {Jesus} has approved him. Say hello to those {believers} who live in the household of Aristobulus. **11**Say hello to my fellow Jew Herodion. Say hello to those whom God united to the Lord {Jesus} who live in the household of Narcissus. **12**Say hello to Tryphaena and Tryphosa. These ladies labor {to tell people} about the Lord {Jesus}. Say hello to Persis, whom I love. She has labored a lot {to tell people} about the Lord {Jesus}. **13**Say hello to Rufus. The Lord {Jesus} chose him. Also {say hello to} his mother. She has been like a mother to me as well. **14**Say hello to Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and our fellow believers who {meet} together with them. **15**Say hello to Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas. Also {say hello to} all God's people who {meet} together with them. **16**Say hello to each other in a loving way. All of the groups of believers who belong to the Messiah {in this area} say hello to you!

17My fellow believers, I exhort you to look out for the people who are causing {believers} to argue {with each other} and tempting {them} to sin, which contradicts what we have taught you. Stay away from them! **18**Indeed, people like this are not serving our Lord {Jesus} the Messiah! Rather, {they only serve} their own appetites. By speaking so eloquently and flatteringly, they trick the minds of people who do not suspect {them of teaching what is false}. **19**{I tell you these things} because {believers} in many places have heard about how you obey {God}. As a result, I am overjoyed because of you! But I {also} desire that you act wisely with regard to what is good and remain innocent

with regard to what is bad. **20**The God who makes {us} peaceful will quickly {make you victorious over Satan, as if} you were trampling{him} under your feet! {I pray that} our Lord Jesus the Messiah {will} be gracious to you!

21Timothy, who works with me {to tell people about Jesus}, says hello to you. My fellow Jews, Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, also {say hello to you}. **22**I {am} Tertius, {and I am} writing this letter {as Paul dictates it to me}. I say hello to you {as a fellow believer} in the Lord {Jesus}. **23**Gaius says hello to you. He hosts me and the whole group of believers {who meet here}. Erastus controls the money for this city. {He} and Quartus, {our} fellow believer, say hello to you. **24***[1]* [{I pray that} our Lord Jesus the Messiah {will} be gracious to all of you! May it be so!]

25{I pray that everyone will glorify God.} He is the one who can strengthen you {spiritually} based on the good news that I proclaim about Jesus the Messiah. {What I proclaim is} based on the mysterious {plan} that God revealed but {previously} concealed {from people} for a very long time. **26**However, now God has revealed {that mysterious plan}. He has made it known through his prophets who wrote about it {in the Scriptures}. {They did this} according to what the God who lives forever commanded in order that all the nations would obey {God} by trusting {in Jesus the Messiah}. **27**God alone is wise. {I pray that everyone will} glorify him through Jesus the Messiah forever! May it be so!

16:24 *[1]*

1 Corinthians

Chapter 1

1{I,} Paul, {write this letter to you,} and Sosthenes our fellow believer {is with me}. God chose to send me to represent the Messiah Jesus, because that is what God wanted. **2**{I send this letter} to {you who are part of} the groups of believers belonging to God, which are in the city of Corinth. {God has} set {you} apart for himself by uniting you to the Messiah Jesus, and {he has} chosen {you} to be his own people. {You are} part of the group of believers who worship our Lord Jesus the Messiah in many countries and cities. {Jesus the Messiah is} their {Lord} and our {Lord}. **3**{May} God, {who is} our Father, and the Lord Jesus the Messiah {continue to be} kind to you and {make you} peaceful.

4I often thank my God about you. {I do this} because {I know how} God is acting kindly towards you by uniting you to the Messiah Jesus. **5**{When I say that God has acted kindly towards you, I mean} that he has abundantly blessed you by uniting you to the Messiah in every area {of your lives}, including whatever you say and whatever you know. **6**{God has blessed you} because he has proved to you that what we told you about the Messiah was true. **7**{God has done these things for you} so that you are completely equipped spiritually {during this time when you} confidently expect our Lord Jesus the Messiah to return. **8**{Just as he proved our message to be true,} God will also prove your trust {in the Messiah} true until {your earthly lives} end. {Because of this,} he will judge you not guilty when our Lord Jesus the Messiah returns {to earth}. **9**God always does what he promises, {and he is the one} who has specially chosen you to share everything with his Son, Jesus the Messiah, our Lord.

10My fellow believers, as one whom our Lord Jesus the Messiah has authorized, I appeal to you, {asking} that all of you agree with one another. {I ask that} you do not split up into rival groups but that you reconcile with each other by agreeing in what you think and by agreeing in what you decide to do. **11**{I appeal to you} because some {members} of Chloe's {household} have talked to me about you, my fellow believers. {They said} that you quarrel among yourselves. **12**What I am talking about is how many of you are claiming that you belong to Paul's group, for example, or that you belong to Apollos' group, or that you belong to Cephas' group, or that you belong to the Messiah's group. **13**No one has split the Messiah into pieces{, so you also should not split into pieces}. No one crucified Paul in your behalf, and no one baptized you so that you belong to Paul. **14**I give thanks {to God} that I baptized no people who belong to your group except for {two individuals:} Crispus and Gaius. **15**Because {I baptized so few of you,} no person is able to claim that I baptized you, so that you belong to my group. **16**Oh yes, I remember that I also baptized those who live in the house of Stephanas. Other than that, I do not think that I baptized any other people {in your group}. **17**The reason {I baptized so few of you} is that the Messiah did not commission me to baptize {people}. Rather, {he commissioned me} to proclaim the good news. {I do this} without using words that are wise {by human standards}. That way, I do not destroy {the power of the message about} the Messiah dying on the cross.

18{I do not use wise words,} because the message that I proclaim about {the death of the Messiah on} the cross sounds foolish to people who are bringing destruction on themselves. However, God works powerfully in this message for us whom he is rescuing. **19**{You can tell that this is true,} because the prophet Isaiah wrote,

"I will render useless the wise things that wise people think,

and I will make the intelligent things that intelligent people think worthless."

20{So then,} wise people are not really wise, and experts are not really experts, and people who are good at arguing are not really good at it, as they all belong to the current world system. {In fact,} God has shown that what seems to be wise in this current world is not wise at all. **21**Here is how {God has done this}. Just as God wisely chose, unbelievers did not get to know God by means of their wise thinking. So, God decided to rescue those who

have faith {in the Messiah} by means of the foolish message that believers proclaim. **22**On the one hand, {many} Jewish people want to see powerful deeds. On the other hand, {many} Greek people search for wise thinking. **23**We, however, proclaim that the Messiah died on a cross. {Many} Jewish people {find this message} offensive, and {many} non-Jewish people {think that this message is} foolish. **24**We, however, whom God has chosen, whether {we are} Jewish {people} or Greek {people}, have learned that God works powerfully and wisely through {this message about} the Messiah. **25**{This is} because what God does that seems foolish is wiser than {anything that} humans {do}, and what God does that seems weak is stronger than {anything that} humans {do}.

26For {proof that this is so,} think about the fact that God chose you {the way you are}, fellow believers. From a human perspective, most of you did not think wisely, do powerful deeds, {or} belong to important families. **27**Rather, God decided to use what seems foolish to humans to humble those who think wisely. God decided to use what seems weak to humans to humble those people and things that act powerfully. **28**God decided to use what seems unimportant to people and what people look down on. {It is as if} these things do not {even} exist, {but God decided to use them} to make the things that everyone knows about insignificant. **29**{God did these things with the goal} that no humans would say great things about themselves in God's sight. **30**It is God who has united you to the Messiah Jesus. By working through the Messiah, God has made us wise. He has declared us innocent, chosen us to be his own people, and delivered us {from evil powers}. **31**So, {because God is the one who does all these things, we should do what} the prophet Jeremiah wrote:

"If people want to say great things about something, they should say those great things about the Lord."

Chapter 2

1My fellow believers, I also {acted according to this pattern} when I visited you and told you about what God has now revealed to us. I did not speak in more powerful ways than others do. I did not argue in wiser ways than others do. **2**{I did this} because I chose {to speak and act as if} the only things I understood while I was with you were Jesus the Messiah and how he died on the cross. **3**I also {lived according to this pattern} when I was staying with you. I was sick, I was afraid, and I frequently shivered and shook. **4**I did not speak wisely and persuasively {according to human standards} when I talked {to you} and shared my message {with you}. Instead, I proved that God's Spirit works powerfully {through me when I shared my message}. **5**{I shared my message in this way} in order that you might trust {in God} because he acts powerfully, not because humans spoke wise words {to you}.

6Despite {what I have said,} we {who proclaim the good news} do speak wisely when we are with spiritually mature people. However, people who think only in human ways and people who rule right now do not think that we speak wisely. {Soon,} these people will no longer rule. **7**No, we speak wisely {because we proclaim} the things that God has revealed to us. God concealed these things {until now}, although he had already decided to do them before he created anything. {He has done all of this} so that he might honor us. **8**The people who rule right now did not know about these wise things. {You can tell that} they did not know, because they killed our glorious Lord on the cross. **9**Rather, {how they acted} fits with what the prophet Isaiah wrote:

"God has ready for the people who love him

things that no one witnessed before

and things that no one heard about before

and things that no human even imagined before."

10God has made these things known to us by the {power of God's} Spirit. {God works by the power of his Spirit} because God's Spirit explores all people and things. He even explores things about God that are very difficult to understand. **11**{You can tell that God's Spirit explores everything about God,} because everyone knows that only each human being understands everything about himself or herself. In the same way, only God's Spirit understands everything about God. **12**We did indeed receive the Spirit who comes from God. We did not receive a

spirit that belongs to the current world. {We received God's Spirit} in order that we might understand everything that God has done for us. **13**These are the very things that we also talk about. We do not use words that humans wisely teach. Instead, we use words that the Spirit teaches, so that we explain spiritual truths with spiritual words. **14**Now, people who do not have God's Spirit reject the things that God's Spirit gives and teaches. {They reject these things,} because they think that they are foolish. They cannot know about {the things that God's Spirit gives and teaches,} because only people who have God's Spirit can judge rightly about them. **15**On the other hand, people who have God's Spirit {can} judge rightly about everything. However, no {other} person {can} judge rightly about them. **16**This fits with {what the scripture says}:

"No human knows what the Lord is thinking.

No human can teach him about anything."

We, however, can think the same things that the Messiah is thinking.

Chapter 3

1My fellow believers, {when I visited you,} I was unable to teach you in the way I would teach people who have God's Spirit. Rather, {I had to teach you} in the way I would teach people who think only in human ways. {I had to do this} because you believed in the Messiah in an immature way. **2**I taught you about things that are simple. I did not teach about things that are complex. {I did this} because you were not ready for complex teachings. In fact, you are still not ready for complex teachings. **3**{I know that you are not ready for complex teachings,} because you are still people who think only in human ways. Some of you are jealous of each other, and some of you are fighting with each other. When you do these things, it proves that you are people who think only in human ways and who act only in human ways. **4**Further, some of you are claiming that you belong to Paul's group, for example, or that you belong to Apollos's group. When you make claims like these, it proves that you are thinking and acting only in human ways.

5You need to realize that Apollos and I, Paul, are just people who serve {the Messiah}. Each of us does what the Lord has assigned us to do. When we told you about the Messiah, you trusted in him{, not in us}. **6**{God assigned} me to proclaim the good news to you first. I was like someone who plants seeds. {God assigned} Apollos to proclaim even more about the good news to you. He was like someone who waters the seeds {so that they grow}. However, God himself enabled you to believe in and understand the good news. In the same way, he is the one who makes the plants grow. **7**You can see that the person who first proclaims the good news to people is not important. The person who proclaims even more about the good news to people is not important. These people are like those who plant the seeds and those who water the plants, since they too are not important. Instead, it is God who is important, because he enables people to believe in and understand the good news. In the same way, he is important because he causes the plants to grow. **8**In fact, the person who first proclaims the good news to people and the person who proclaims more about the good news to people have the same goal. They are like the person who plants the seeds and the person who waters the plants, who also have the same goal. God will reward people who do either task. {He will reward them} in a way that is appropriate for what they did. **9**We {who proclaim the good news} all work for God, but you belong to God. It is as if you were farmland that God owns{, in which we planted and watered seeds}. Indeed, it is as if you were a house that God owns.

10God gave me the skills to wisely proclaim the good news to you first. I am like the construction boss who puts a foundation in the ground before building a house. Others{, such as Apollos,} proclaim more about the good news to you. They are like other builders who construct a house on top of that foundation. In the end, all the people who proclaim more about the good news should make sure that they proclaim it correctly. They should be like builders who construct a house the right way on top of a foundation. **11**No one can put a foundation in the ground if another person has already put it in the ground. So also, no one else can first proclaim the good news to you, because I already did that. What I proclaimed to you is {what} Jesus the Messiah {accomplished}. This message about Jesus is like the foundation of a house. **12**Builders can use many different building materials when they construct a house on its foundation. They can use {more durable materials like} gold, silver, and jewels, {and less

durable materials like} lumber, grass, and straw. In the same way, some of those who proclaim more about the good news teach things that are more pleasing to God. Others teach things that are less pleasing to God. **13**On the day when the Messiah returns to judge everyone, he will reveal what kind of work each person has done. The quality of the materials that builders use to construct a building becomes clear when the building catches on fire. In a similar way, a judgment like fire will occur on the day when the Messiah returns. This judgment will show the quality of what those who proclaim more about the gospel have taught. **14**Any builders who constructed a building that survives a fire gain honor and money. In the same way, God will honor and reward all those who teach more about the good news in a way that God accepts when he judges everyone. **15**Any builders who constructed a building that fire consumes lose respect and money. However, the builders do not die in the fire, but they escape from the flames. In the same way, when he judges everyone, God will not honor or reward all those who teach more about the good news in a way that God does not accept. However, God will still accept these teachers despite the wrong things that they have taught.

16You need to remember that you are like God's temple in Jerusalem {because God is present among you like he was present in the temple}. You need to remember that you are like a house in which God's Spirit lives {because he is always present with you}. **17**God will act against any person who acts against his temple. This is because God's temple belongs to him alone. {Since} you are like God's temple{, God will act against any person who acts against you}.

18Do not believe what is not true about yourselves. You who consider yourselves to be wise according to human standards should become foolish {according to human standards}. In this way, you will {really} become wise people. **19**{I speak these words} because the things that humans consider to be wise are things that God considers to be foolish. {You know that this is true} because the author of the book of Job wrote,

"God is the one who disrupts the clever schemes that wise people plan."

20Further, {the author of a psalm wrote},

"The Lord is aware of everything that wise people plan, {and he knows} that these plans will not succeed."

21Therefore, none of you should boast about {how you follow other} humans. {I say this} because you have everything{, so boasting about following other humans is foolish}. **22**You have {leaders such as} Paul, Apollos, and Peter. You have everything that God made, {you do not fear when} you live, and {you can find comfort when you} die. You have everything that exists now and everything that will exist in the future. Indeed, you have everything. **23**Further, the Messiah has you, and God has the Messiah.

Chapter 4

1I want people to think of us {who proclaim the good news} as those who serve the Messiah and who are in charge of proclaiming what God has now revealed to us. **2**Whenever a leader puts another person in charge, the leader requires that person to do his or her tasks faithfully. {In the same way, God requires that we who proclaim the good news do our task faithfully.} **3**I do not worry about what you or any other human authority decides {about whether I have acted faithfully or not}. In fact, I do not even worry about what I myself decide {about whether I have acted faithfully or not}. **4**In fact, I do not know about anything I have done wrong. However, what I know about myself does not prove that I have acted faithfully. Rather, it is the Lord who will decide {whether I have acted faithfully or not}. **5**So then, you should not finally decide about anything until the Lord comes back {to judge everyone and everything}. He will make clear what is now hidden, and he will show everyone what each person desires and plans. At that time, God will praise each person {who has acted faithfully}.

6My fellow believers, I have talked in this way about myself and Apollos for your benefit. I want you to learn from our example that you should act only in ways that fit with what the authors of the Scriptures wrote. Then, nobody will speak great things about one leader and bad things about another leader. **7**Nobody has set you apart {from

every other believer}. In fact, God has given to you every good thing that you have. Since these things are gifts from God, you should not say proudly that you yourself earned them.

8{You are acting as if} you currently have everything that you need spiritually. {You are acting as if} you currently have more spiritual blessings than you need. {You are acting as if} you have currently begun to rule with Christ, even though we {who proclaim the good news} are not ruling with Christ now. Indeed, I wish that you really were ruling with him, in order that we {who proclaim the good news} could be ruling with you. **9**Rather {than thinking that we rule with Christ now}, I consider us apostles to be those whom God has appointed to suffer humiliation and to die. We suffer humiliation and die publicly, and everything that God has created, including spiritual beings and humans, can see us. **10**We {seem to} be foolish people because we serve the Messiah, but {you think that} you are wise people because God unites you to the Messiah. We {seem to} be people who do not have power or influence, but {you think that} you do have these things. {You think that} people praise you, but those people shame us. **11**Even now {as I write this letter to you}, we {whom Christ has sent} have often not had enough food or drink. We wear ragged clothing, and others repeatedly strike us. We constantly travel and do not return to a home. **12**We do manual labor {to earn a living}. When people speak badly to us, we say good things about them. When people hurt us {because we serve the Messiah}, we patiently live through it. **13**When people say bad things about us, we say encouraging words to them. From a human perspective, we are worthless, like filthy garbage that someone should throw away. {All these things are true about us} even now {as I write this letter to you}.

14I do not include in my letter what I have just finished saying because I want to make you ashamed. Rather, {I include these things} because I want to admonish you, since you are like my own children, whom I love. **15**When I first preached the good news to you, and God united you to Jesus the Messiah, I became your spiritual father. So, even if you had a million teachers who helped you to live in union with the Messiah, I would still be the only spiritual father you have. **16**Because {I am your spiritual father}, I plead with you to imitate how I live. **17**Because {I want you to imitate me}, I had Timothy visit you. He is like my own child, and I love him. He faithfully {serves the Messiah} as one whom God has united to the Lord. He will teach you again about how I behave as one whom God has united to the Messiah Jesus. I instruct every church in every place {that I visit} to behave in these ways.

18Some of you are saying great things about yourselves. These people act as if I were not about to visit you. **19**However, I will visit you very soon, as long as the Lord wants {me to do so}. I already know what these people who say great things about themselves claim. {When I visit you}, I will learn whether they are actually powerful or not. **20**{I will do this} because God's kingdom functions by God working powerfully through people, not by people saying great things. **21**When you choose how you will respond to what I am saying, you are also choosing how I will act {when I visit}. When I visit you, I can either harshly discipline you {because you did not listen}, or I can act gently and lovingly {because you did listen}.

Chapter 5

1I have learned that you are in fact allowing people from your group to have improper sex. Even those who do not worship God do not allow some of the things that you allow. {The worst thing that I have learned is} that a man from your group is having sex with his stepmother. **2**{Despite this,} you still say great things about yourselves instead of lamenting {that sin}. {You should have lamented} with the goal of expelling the man who committed this sexual sin. **3**{You should expel him} because I have already declared the man who did this evil thing to be guilty. Although I am not with you physically, I think about you and care about you. {Therefore, when I declare this man to be guilty, it is as valid} as if I were with you. **4**When you gather together, and I am thinking of you, we represent our Lord Jesus the Messiah. {When you gather in this way, you should punish this man} as our Lord Jesus authorizes you to do. **5**You should expel this man so that Satan rules over him. That will destroy his sinful parts, and then God will save him when the Lord returns.

6Saying great things about yourselves is not the right thing to do. Surely you realize that one person doing evil things is like fermented dough. Even a little fermented dough makes a whole lump of dough fermented, and even one person doing evil things makes the whole church guilty. **7**Just as Jews remove the yeast from their houses

{during the Passover festival}, so you should remove anyone who does evil things from your group. Then, you will be free of sin, just like fresh, unleavened dough is free of yeast. In fact, you live in a time that is like the festival of Passover. {This is because} the Messiah has died for you, just like the lamb that Jews sacrifice during the Passover festival represents how God delivered them. **8**Since {the Messiah has died for us}, let us act as if we were participating in the festival of Passover and remove the old leaven. We should get rid of the leaven, which stands for doing what is evil and wicked. Instead, we should eat unfermented bread, which stands for doing what is honest and trustworthy.

9In the letter {that I sent to you before this one}, I told you not to keep company with people who act in sexually improper ways. **10**{I did} not {mean that you should} entirely {disassociate} with unbelieving people who act in sexually immoral ways, or with people who want more than they need or who cheat others, or with people who worship false gods. To avoid these kinds of people, you would need to get away from the entire world. {That is not what I have commanded you to do.} **11**Now, in this letter, I am telling you not to keep company with any person whom you call a fellow believer who is acting sinfully. This includes having improper sex, wanting more than one needs, worshiping other gods, abusing others with words, getting drunk, and cheating others. Do not have meals with a person who does any of these things. **12**{I want you to act in this way only with fellow believers,} because {you and} I do not need to decide whether someone who is not part of our group is guilty or innocent. Rather, you need to focus on deciding whether people who are part of your group are guilty or innocent. **13**{Do not worry about people who are not part of your group because} God is the one who decides whether they are guilty or innocent. {You should focus on people who are part of your group because the scripture says,}

“You must get rid of any evil person who is part of your group!”

Chapter 6

1When someone from your group quarrels with another person from your group, you should never settle the quarrel {in a public court} in front of people who do not believe. Rather, {you should settle the quarrel in private} among the people whom God has set apart for himself. **2**Surely you know that the people whom God has set apart for himself will decide whether all things and people that God has created are guilty or innocent. Since you will decide whether all these things and people are guilty or innocent, you can surely decide about small quarrels {within your group}. **3**You need to realize that we will decide whether angels are innocent or guilty. {Since we will do that,} we are certainly able to decide about disputes related to our current lives. **4**Therefore, whenever you quarrel with one another concerning your current lives, you should not choose people who are not part of your group of believers to decide who is guilty or innocent. **5**I include what I have just said in order to make you feel ashamed. Surely there are people in your group who are wise enough to be able to decide about disputes among fellow believers. **6**But instead, some believers among you accuse other believers in a legal court, and people who do not believe settle the dispute.

7Because you have disputes with each other, you have already completely failed to follow Jesus. Rather {than failing in this way}, you should instead forgive fellow believers when they harm or defraud you. **8**Rather {than forgiving others}, however, you have harmed and defrauded {other people}. In fact, {you have done} these things to fellow believers!

9{I am shocked that you do these things} even though you realize that people who harm others will not participate in God’s kingdom. Do not believe anyone who tells you something else. Anyone who has improper sex or who worships other gods or who has sex with a married person or who participates in sexual acts with a person of the same gender or who initiates sexual acts with a person of the same gender **10**or who steals from others or who wants more than he or she needs or who gets drunk or who abuses others with words or who cheats others will not participate in God’s kingdom. **11**Some of you used to behave in these ways. However, now God has cleansed you, he has made you holy, and he has declared you to be innocent. {You experience these things} because the Lord Jesus the Messiah and the Holy Spirit work powerfully {to give them to you}.

12{Some of you say,} “I can do anything and not become guilty.” However, {I say that} some things are not helpful {to anybody}. {Again, some of you say,} “I can do anything and not become guilty.” However, {I say that} I will not serve anything that will make me its slave. **13**{Some of you say,} “Food exists for a person’s stomach to digest it, and a person’s stomach exists to digest food.” Indeed, {I also say that} God will make food and stomachs unimportant. {While it is true that food exists for a person’s stomach,} the human body does not exist for a person to have improper sex with it. Instead, {the human body} exists to serve the Lord, and the Lord has worked to save the human body. **14**In fact, God made the Lord alive again, and he will work powerfully to make us also alive again.

15Surely you know that your bodies belong to the Messiah, just as if you were his body parts. Because of that, you should not take your body back and then give it to a prostitute, so that your body belongs to her, just as if you were her body parts. Never do that! **16**Surely you know that a man who has sex with a prostitute unites himself to her as closely as if they shared the same body. {You should know this} because the scripture says, “The {man and the woman, although} two people, will become {like} one person.” **17**In a similar way, any people who unite themselves to the Lord become spiritually one {with the Lord}.

18Intentionally avoid having improper sex. When people sin, they usually do so without directly hurting their bodies. However, when people have improper sex, they do hurt their own bodies. **19**Surely you know that God has given the Holy Spirit to you. Therefore, your bodies are like temples for the Holy Spirit, since he unites himself to you {like how a god unites himself to his temple}. Because of that, you do not belong to yourselves. **20**{Rather, you belong to God, since the Messiah died for you. When he died for you,} it was as if God paid money to buy you. Because {you belong to God}, you must honor him whenever you do anything with your body.

Chapter 7

1Moving on to what you asked me about, in your letter you said that it is appropriate for people not to have sex with each other. **2**On the other hand, people often desire to have sex, even improper sex. Because of that, a husband should stay married to his own wife, and a wife should stay married to her own husband. **3**Husbands should regularly have sex with their wives. Similarly, wives should regularly have sex with their husbands. **4**Wives’ bodies belong to their husbands, not to themselves. Similarly, husbands’ bodies belong to their wives, not to themselves. **5**You should only stop having sex regularly when both of you agree to do so for a brief time. You should only do this when you want to focus on praying to God, and you should soon resume having sex regularly. If you do not do this quickly, Satan will use how you desire to have sex to entice you to do what is wrong.

6I do not command you {to stop having sex regularly in order to focus on praying}. Rather, I am only allowing you {to do so}. **7**If it were up to me, all people would be like me {and remain unmarried}. However, God gives each person his or her own way to live. Some {people live in} one way, while other people {live in} another way.

8Here I am speaking to people who have not married and to women whose husbands have died. The best thing {for these people} is to stay {unmarried} like I do. **9**However, some people will struggle to control how they desire to have sex. These people should get married, because that is a better choice than constantly desiring to have sex.

10Here I am speaking what the Lord himself said to people who have gotten married. I require the wives to stay with their husbands. **11**Now whenever they do not stay with their husbands, they should not marry again, or they should go back to their husbands. Further, husbands should stay with their wives.

12Now to the rest {of you who have a spouse who is not a believer}, the Lord did not speak about this, so I am speaking what I myself command. Some fellow believers have unbelieving wives, and the wives may wish to stay with their believing husbands. In this situation, the husbands should stay with their wives. **13**Similarly, some fellow believers have unbelieving husbands, and the husbands may wish to stay with their believing wives. In this situation, the wives should stay with their husbands. **14**{You should remain with an unbelieving husband or wife,} because God considers the unbelieving husband to be an acceptable spouse for the believing wife. Similarly, God considers the unbelieving wife to be an acceptable spouse for the believing husband. Because of this, God treats

the children in this situation just like he treats the children of two believing parents. If what I have said were not true, God would treat the children in this situation just like he treats the children of two unbelieving parents.

15On the other hand, some unbelieving husbands or wives may want to leave their believing spouses. In this situation, the believing spouses should allow them to leave. The believing spouses do not have to stay with their unbelieving husbands or wives. {In any situation like this, remember that} God requires us to be peaceful people. **16**{You should allow an unbelieving spouse to leave} because each wife does not know whether she can help her husband to believe in Jesus. Each husband also does not know whether he can help his wife to believe in Jesus.

17In general, all people need to behave in ways that fit with what the Lord has appointed them to do and with how God requires them to act. I require people to follow this teaching in every group of believers {that I visit}. **18**There are some people whom others circumcised before they believed in Jesus. These people should not try to become uncircumcised again. There are other people whom others did not circumcise before they believed in Jesus. These people should not try to become circumcised. **19**Whether a person has had someone circumcise them or not does not matter {to us or to God}. On the other hand, doing what God requires of us {does matter to us and to God}. **20**All people should serve God faithfully while doing the normal things they were already doing when God changed them. **21**Some people were slaves when they believed in Jesus. These people should not worry about being slaves. On the other hand, they should make use of any chance they have to become free. **22**{Do not worry about your social position,} because the Lord considers all people who were slaves when they believed in him to be free people now. Similarly, the Messiah considers all people who were free people when they believed in him to be his slaves now. **23**{When Jesus died for you,} it was as if God paid money to buy you. {Because of that,} you should not serve other humans, but only God. **24**My fellow believers, all people should serve God faithfully while doing the normal things they were already doing when God changed them.

25I am now moving on to speak about those who have not gotten married. On this issue, I do not have anything that the Lord said to tell you. However, I will tell you what I think is best. {I do this} because God has acted kindly towards me by making me a trustworthy {teacher}. **26**What I suggest is that people should not change how they are living. I say this because I know that dangerous things are going to happen soon. **27**Some people have gotten engaged. They should not separate. Other people have never gotten engaged. They should not try to become engaged. **28**However, a single man or woman who gets married does not sin. I only advise you against getting married because people who get married will experience troubles while they live.

29My fellow believers, what I am about to tell you {is important}. The end times are not far away. Therefore, until then, each man who has a wife should live like a man who does not have a wife. **30**Each person who cries should live like a person who does not cry. Each person who is glad should live like a person who is not glad. Each person who acquires anything should live like a person who does not own anything. **31**Each person who utilizes worldly things should live like a person who does not utilize these things. {You should act in these ways} because God will soon abolish the worldly way of doing things.

32I want you to care about few things. Single men care about what they can do to serve the Lord. **33**On the other hand, married men care about worldly things, particularly how they can serve their wives. Because of this, they care about two different things{: serving their wives and serving the Lord}. Single women and women who have never gotten married **34**care about what they can do to serve the Lord. Their goal is to be completely holy. On the other hand, married women care about worldly things, particularly how they can serve their husbands. **35**I have said these things because I think they are helpful for you. I do not want to force you into acting in only one way. Rather, I want you to be able to act honorably and serve the Lord well and attentively.

36In some cases, an engaged man may consider that he might act in sexually improper ways with his fiancée. Further, his fiancée may be fully mature and ready to have sex. In these cases, here is what to do: the man should marry his fiancé. He does not sin {when he does this}, and the two of them should get married. **37**In other cases, an engaged man may have made up his mind, and no person or thing has forced him {not to marry}. He can control what he desires, and he has decided for himself {not to marry}. In this case, he can rightly choose not to marry his

fiancée. **38**In the end, any man who gets married to his fiancée does a good thing. Further, any man who does not get married {to his fiancée} does a better thing.

39Wives must stay married to their husbands unless their husbands die. Then, they may marry any believing man whom they want to marry. **40**However, {I think that} any woman whose husband has died will be more blessed if she does not marry again. While that is my opinion, I think that God's Spirit speaks through me.

Chapter 8

1I am now moving on to speak about meat that someone has offered to another god. All of us {who believe} do know {what is true about other gods. However,} knowing {what is true often} makes people proud. It is loving others that really helps other believers. **2**All people who reckon that they understand something do not yet understand it in the way that they should understand it. **3**However, God understands and cares for all people who love him.

4Now {I will go back to speaking} about whether to eat meat that someone has offered to another god. We {who believe in God} understand that other gods do not really exist. In fact, {we understand} that the only god is the one God. **5**It is true that there are many things that are in heaven or on earth that people call "gods." In this way, many "gods" and "lords" exist. **6**However, we {who believe} acknowledge one God, who is the Father. He created everything, and we exist to honor him. We also acknowledge one Lord, who is Jesus the Messiah. He created everything with the Father, and we exist by means of what he does {for us}.

7However, some people do not fully understand {what I have said}. They used to worship other gods in the past, and they incompletely understand what is right and wrong. When they eat meat that someone has offered to another god, they feel guilty. **8**Now food does not connect us with God. Those who do not eat {certain foods} do not miss out {on anything from God}. Also, those who do eat {certain foods} do not receive something extra {from God}. **9**However, you need to be careful about how you live if you know {that food is not significant}. How you live should not cause someone who incompletely understands what is right and wrong to struggle {to follow Jesus}. **10**{You need to be careful} because fellow believers might observe a believer who knows {what is true about other gods} sitting down to eat {meat} in another god's temple. Those fellow believers, who incompletely understand what is right and wrong, will become confident that they also can eat meat that someone has offered to another god. **11**As a result, by acting based on what you know {is true about other gods}, you harm others who incompletely understand what is right and wrong. These are fellow believers, and the Messiah died for them. **12**When you act in these ways, you sin against fellow believers by leading them, who incompletely understand what is right and wrong, to do what they think is wrong. {When do you this,} you sin against the Messiah too. **13**Consequently, in cases where what I eat would lead a fellow believer to sin, I will never ever eat meat again{, whether someone has offered it to another god or not}. This way, I do not lead any of my fellow believers to sin.

Chapter 9

1I am not bound {to eat only certain foods}. Our Lord Jesus sent me to represent him, and I have seen him {with my own eyes}. God has united us to the Lord, and I have worked hard for you because of that. **2**Other people may not think that the Messiah sent me to represent him, but you do know that. {You know that} because you proved that the Messiah sent me when God united you to the Lord.

3I will now defend myself against anyone who wants to question {whether the Messiah sent} me {to represent him or not}. **4**Barnabas and I certainly can require you to send us food and drink. **5**We certainly can travel around with a wife who believes in the Messiah. This is what the others whom the Messiah has sent to represent him do, including Peter and the Lord's brothers. **6**It is not true that Barnabas and I are the only ones {who represent the Messiah} who must work {to support ourselves}. **7**No soldiers ever pay with their own money to serve in the army.

No farmers plant vines and then do not eat what the vines produce. No shepherds take care of sheep and then do not drink the milk that they produce.

8What I am arguing does not depend on merely human thinking. Rather, you can read what I am arguing in the law {of Moses}. **9**Here is what Moses wrote in the law of Moses: "You should not keep an ox from eating the grain when it is helping you separate grain from chaff." God is not primarily interested in oxen{, however}. **10**Rather, God speaks mostly about us {in this law}. God had Moses write this command for us because any person who plows a field should expect to receive some of the crop. Any person who separates the grain from the wheat stalks should also expect to receive some of the crop. **11**We proclaimed the good news to you as if we were planting spiritual seeds. Because of that, it would be normal for us to receive financial help from you as if we were receiving some of the crop that grew from the seed that we planted. **12**Other people have received financial support from you. Barnabas and I deserve even more to receive it from you.

However, we have not asked for any support from you. Rather, we choose to go without things so that we will not keep the good news about the Messiah from spreading. **13**Surely you know that the people who perform their duties in the temple eat some of the food that people offer in the temple. More specifically, the priests who offer sacrifices on the altar receive part of what people bring to them to offer on the altar. **14**Similarly, the Lord instructed that anyone who preaches the good news should make their living from {preaching} the good news.

15However, I have not asked for any of this support from you. Further, I am not now writing to you to ask for support for myself. I would prefer to die rather than to have someone take away what I can boast about. **16**Now I cannot boast about preaching the good news, because God requires me to preach it. Indeed, were I to stop preaching the good news, God would discipline me. **17**God would reward me if I preached the good news because I myself chose to. However, I have not chosen to do so, for God himself has told me what I need to do. **18**God still rewards me, however. {He does so} when I preach the good news without requiring people to pay me. I tell people about the good news in this way so that I do not misuse what I am able to require because I preach the good news.

19{Since I preach the good news for free,} I do not need to serve any humans. However, I choose to serve all humans so that I can help more of them {believe in the Messiah}. **20**When I am with Jewish people, I act like a Jewish person. That way, I can help Jewish people {believe in the Messiah}. When I am with people who think they need to obey Moses' law, I act like someone who thinks that he needs to obey Moses' law. While I myself know that I do not need to obey Moses' law, {I act this way} so that I can help the people who think they need to obey Moses' law {believe in the Messiah}. **21**When I am with people who do not obey Moses' law, I act like someone who does not obey Moses' law. {I act this way} so that I can help the people who do not obey Moses' law {to believe in the Messiah}. Of course, I do obey God's law, since I do what the Messiah commanded. **22**When I am with people who incompletely understand what is right and wrong, I act like someone who incompletely understands what is right and wrong. {I act this way} so that I can help the people who incompletely understand what is right and wrong {to believe in the Messiah}. {As you can see,} when I am with any people, I act like they do so that God might work through all the things I do in order to save some of them. **23**As you can see, I act in all these ways because I want people to believe in the good news. {Further, I do these things} in order that I too will receive what God has promised in the good news.

24Surely you know that all the runners participate in a race, but in the end only one runner wins the race and takes the reward for winning. When you serve God, it is much like this kind of race. You need to work hard to gain what God has promised to you, just like the runner runs hard to win the race. **25**All athletes carefully control everything that they do {so that they can win}. They compete for a crown made of leaves that will fall apart. We, however, {control ourselves so that we can receive what God has promised to give us,} which will last forever. **26**Because of this, I am like a runner who runs straight toward the finish line. I am like a boxer who strikes an opponent without missing. **27**I totally control my body and make it serve me. I do that because I do not want to proclaim the good news to other people but then find that God does not approve of me.

Chapter 10

1Now I want to remind you, fellow believers, that our Jewish ancestors all followed God when he appeared to them in a cloud. They all walked through the Red Sea when God made a dry path for them through the water. **2**{It was as if} someone baptized all of them so that they belonged to Moses. {This happened} when they followed the cloud and walked through the Red Sea. **3**All of them together ate the special food that God gave them. **4**All of them together drank the special water that God gave them. This happened when they drank the water that came out of the special rock that God provided and that followed them. That water was something that the Messiah gave. **5**However, most of our Jewish ancestors did not please God. {You can tell that this is true} because they died while they traveled through the desert places.

6The things that happened to them illustrate how we should act. Through what happened to them, God warns us to avoid doing what is evil, such as the evil things that they did. **7**You should not worship idols, which is what some of our Jewish ancestors did. {You can tell that they worshiped idols,} because Moses wrote, "The Israelites started eating and drinking and then worshiped other gods in sexually immoral ways." **8**We should not have improper sex, which is what some of our Jewish ancestors did. Because they did this, 23,000 of them died during one day. **9**We should not challenge the Lord, which is what some of our Jewish ancestors did. Because they did this, snakes killed them. **10**You should not complain, which is what some of our Jewish ancestors did. Because they did this, a dangerous spiritual being {whom God sent} killed them.

11Those things that our ancestors experienced illustrate {how we should act}. In fact, someone wrote down what happened to them so that we can learn from them, since we are the ones who are experiencing the last days. **12**As those stories illustrate, any people who think that they firmly believe {in the Messiah} should make sure that they do not fail {to follow the Messiah}. **13**Other people have experienced the things that tempt you. Further, God will act faithfully. He will not let you experience anything that tempts you if you cannot resist it. Rather, when something tempts you, he will give you what you need to faithfully resist it.

14Because {of that I have said}, fellow believers whom I love, intentionally avoid worshiping other gods. **15**I am talking this way because I think that you are reasonable people. You should decide for yourselves whether what I am about to say is right or wrong. **16**When we drink the wine that we bless in the Lord's Supper, we together connect ourselves with the Messiah's blood. When we eat the bread, we together connect ourselves with the Messiah's body. **17**We use one loaf of bread {in the Lord's Supper}, and we all together eat pieces of that one loaf. Because we do this, we join ourselves together like we all make up one body.

18Take the people of Israel as an example. The people who offered something would eat some of what they offered. This means that they connected themselves with the altar{, where the priest would present the rest of what they offered to God}. **19**I am arguing, therefore, that meat that someone has offered to another god and other gods themselves are not powerful or important. **20**However, {you should know} that when those who do not worship God offer sacrifices, they are offering them to evil spiritual beings, not to God. I want you to avoid connecting yourselves with evil spiritual beings. **21**You cannot drink wine that belongs to the Lord and also wine that belongs to evil spiritual beings. You cannot eat food that belongs to the Lord and also food that belongs to evil spiritual beings. **22**Those who do both of those things should expect the Lord to act jealously against them. Further, we are certainly less powerful than he is.

23{Some of you say,} "I can do anything and not become guilty." However, {I say that} some things are not helpful {to anybody}. {Again, some of you say,} "I can do anything and not become guilty." However, {I say that} some things do not help you grow. **24**Do not work hard to gain what is best for yourselves. Rather, {you should work hard to gain} what is best for other people. **25**You can eat any food that you buy in the public marketplace. You do not need to find out {where it came from} so that you know whether it is right or wrong {to eat it}. **26**{You can do this} because {David wrote}, "The earth and everything connected with it belongs to the Lord." **27**At some point, people who do not believe may ask you {to eat with them}, and you may decide to {do so}. When this happens, you can eat all the food that they serve you. You do not need to find out {where it came from} so that you know whether it is

right or wrong {to eat it}. **28**(However, someone might tell you that a person offered the food to a god. In this situation, you should not eat the food. {You should act in this way} to benefit the person who told you {about the food} and because of knowing what is right and wrong. **29**By "knowing what is right and wrong," I mean what the other person knows, not what you know.) In general, what another person thinks is right or wrong should not keep me from doing what I am able to do. **30**As long as I am grateful to God when I eat any food, no one should speak badly about me because of something for which I thanked God.

31To summarize, whenever you eat or drink anything, and indeed whenever you do anything, you should always behave so that you and others honor God. **32**Do not behave in ways that discourage Jewish people, non-Jewish people, or fellow believers from trusting the Messiah. **33**I illustrate {how to do this} with how I live. I always act in ways that everyone around me accepts. I do not work hard to gain what is best for myself. Rather, {I work hard to gain what is best} for other people. {I do this} in order that God will save them.

Chapter 11

1Do what I do, just like I do what Christ did.

2I commend you because you always think of what I teach and do and because you carefully believe and do what I taught you to believe and do. **3**I am telling you that each man comes from the Messiah. A wife comes from her husband. Finally, the Messiah comes from God. **4**Men might cover their heads when they pray or proclaim what God says. Those who do this shame the person they come from: {the Messiah}. **5**Now women might bare their heads when they pray or proclaim what God says. Those who do this shame the people they come from: {their husbands}. {You can tell that this is true,} because a woman who bares her head is like a woman whose hair someone has shaved off. **6**In fact, someone should cut short the hair of any woman who bares her head. Since people shame a woman who has short hair, women should not bare their heads. **7**Further, on the one hand, men should not cover their heads, because they represent and honor God. On the other hand, wives honor their husbands. **8**{You can tell that this is true} because God did not make the man Adam from the woman Eve. Rather, he made the woman Eve from the man Adam. **9**Another {way that you can tell that this is true is} because God did not make the man Adam for the sake of the woman Eve. Rather, he made the woman Eve for the sake of the man Adam. **10**Because {wives honor their husbands}, women should control {what they wear} on their heads. {They should do this also} because of the powerful spiritual beings.

11Despite all that, when God unites people to the Messiah, women cannot exist without men, and men cannot exist without women. **12**In fact, while the woman {Eve} did come from the man {Adam}, men only exist because women give birth to them. However, everything that exists{, including men and women,} comes from God. **13**You yourselves should decide whether women who pray to God without covering their heads act appropriately or not. **14**You can learn from observing the way things are that it is dishonorable for men to have long hair. **15**However, {you can also learn from observing the way things are} that it is honorable for women to have long hair. {This is} because God has given women their long hair, which functions to cover {their heads}. **16**Now if any people consider arguing about what I have said, neither we nor God's churches allow women to uncover their heads {when they pray or prophesy}.

17I am now going to instruct you about another topic, and I cannot commend you in this area. {I cannot commend you,} because you harm fellow believers instead of helping them when you gather as fellow believers. **18**Here is the first thing I will speak about: some people have told me that you split up into rival groups when you gather as fellow believers to worship God. I believe that this is partly true. **19**{I believe it} because there need to be disagreements in your group. That way, it may become clear {to everyone} whom in your group God considers to be acceptable {to him}. **20**Because of these divisions, you are not actually eating the Lord's Supper when you gather as fellow believers together {to eat}. **21**During your meals, some people are eating their own food before {others receive some}. In this way, some people do not have enough to eat, while other people are getting drunk. **22**You act in these ways despite the fact that you can eat food and drink wine in your own houses. Instead, though, you think

contemptuously about God's church. In particular, you shame people who have less than you do. You should already know what I will say to you. I am not going to commend you for doing these things. I will definitely not do that!

23I have already told you what I learned from the Lord about the night when Judas handed the Lord Jesus over {to the authorities, who executed him}. During that night, Jesus picked up a loaf of bread. **24**He thanked God {for the loaf of bread}, and then he tore it into pieces {so that the disciples could eat it}. Then he said, "This {bread} is my body, which I am offering for your sake. Repeat what I have done so that you remember {how I am offering} myself {for you}." **25**Just as {he picked up the loaf of bread}, he also picked up the cup {of wine} after they had eaten. He said, "This cup {of wine} is the new covenant {that I am inaugurating} with my blood. Repeat what I have done whenever you drink from this cup of wine so that you remember {how I am offering} myself {for you}." **26**This means that, until the Lord comes back, whenever {you participate in the Lord's Supper by} eating this bread and drinking {wine from} this cup, you announce that the Lord has died.

27So then, some people, while participating in the Lord's Supper, might eat the bread or drink {wine from} the cup in a way that dishonors {the Messiah}. God will hold them responsible for {how they have acted against} the Lord's body and blood. **28**To avoid that, believers should carefully consider how they are behaving. Then, they can eat the bread and drink {wine} from the cup. **29**{You should carefully consider how you are behaving,} because some people eat and drink {during the Lord's Supper} but do not recognize {that God has united fellow believers to the Lord as closely as if they were} the Lord's body. How those people eat and drink {during the Lord's Supper} will result in God punishing them. **30**Because {people in your group have acted in that improper way}, many of them have gotten sick and some of them have died. **31**So, we believers really should carefully consider how we are acting {before we participate in the Lord's Supper}. Then, God will not punish us. **32**However, when the Lord does punish us, he does it to train us. That way, God does not include us when he declares everyone who does not believe in the Messiah to be guilty.

33In conclusion, my fellow believers, when you gather together to eat {the Lord's Supper}, you should not start eating until everyone has received food and drink. **34**Any people who are {so} hungry {that they start eating before everyone has received food and drink} should eat at their own houses. That way, when you gather together as fellow believers, God will not punish you.

I have not said everything that I need to say. So, I will instruct you about those things whenever I visit you.

Chapter 12

1I am now moving on to speak about how God's Spirit specially empowers believers. I want to inform you, my fellow believers, about these things. **2**You remember {what you did} when you were not believers. You worshiped other gods. These other gods cannot even speak, but you did whatever {wrong things people told you to do} to worship these other gods. **3**So then, I am informing you that a person who curses Jesus does not speak with the power of God's Spirit. On the other hand, a person who says that Jesus is Lord must be speaking with the power of the Holy Spirit.

4The Spirit empowers people in many different ways, but there is only one Spirit. **5**People serve the Lord in many different ways, but there is only one Lord. **6**People work for God in many different ways, but there is only one God. He is the one who empowers all people to function in all these ways.

7Each believer receives from God specific ways in which God's Spirit works through them to help fellow believers. **8**For example, God's Spirit empowers some believers to speak wisely. Other believers can speak knowledgeably, and the same Spirit empowers them to do this. **9**The same Spirit empowers some believers to trust God in special ways. The same Spirit empowers other believers to heal others. **10**Other believers can do powerful things. Other believers can speak messages from God. Other believers can decide whether something comes from God's Spirit or not. Some believers can speak unknown languages. Other believers can interpret those unknown languages. **11**The

same Spirit works to empower believers to do all these things. There is just one Holy Spirit, and he decides how to work specifically through each believer.

12{We consider} a person's body to be a unity, but the body has many body parts. So, all those body parts, no matter how many there are, together make up one body. {We can think about} the Messiah in a similar way. **13**Now, {God has united us together as closely as if} we made up one body. {This happened when} people baptized us, with the result that we have the one Spirit. {We make up this one body} even though some of us are Jewish people and others are non-Jewish people, and even though some of us are slaves and others are free people. Further, we all shared in this one Spirit just like we all shared a drink from one cup.

14As you know, one body part does not make up a body. Rather, it takes many body parts {to make up a body}. **15**Imagine that your foot {could talk to you, and it} said that, since it was not a hand, it could not belong to your body. That reason does not keep it from belonging to your body. **16**Again, imagine that your ear {could talk to you, and it} said that, since it was not an eye, it could not belong to your body. That reason does not keep it from belonging to your body. **17**Imagine that only eyes made up your body. You would not be able to hear anything! Imagine that only ears made up your body. You would not be able to smell anything! **18**But here is what is true {about the body}: God decided how each body part should function, and he connected each body part to the body for a specific reason. **19**Imagine that all {your body parts} were the same {kind of} body part. You would not really have a body at all! **20**But here is what is true {about the body}: many {different} body parts exist. However, {together they make up} one body. **21**Imagine again that your body parts could talk. An eye would never tell a hand, "I do not need you." Similarly, a head would never tell feet, "I do not need you." **22**Rather, what is true is that the body parts that we consider to be the delicate ones are actually necessary. **23**Further, we more highly value the body parts that we think of as less valuable. We treat our indecent body parts more decently, **24**but we do not treat our decent body parts in any special way. In the end, God is the one who put all the body parts together into one body, and he makes the less valuable parts more valuable. **25**{God did this} in order that the body would not split up into different parts. Instead, the body parts work together and do not privilege one body part over other body parts. **26**So, all the body parts hurt when one body part is hurting. All the body parts celebrate when somebody praises one body part.

27{I say all this because} you all are {like} the Messiah's body. Each of you is {like} a body part {in that body}. **28**In line with that, God has specially empowered the people who worship him. First, some people are those whom God has sent to represent the Messiah. Second, some people proclaim what God says. Third, some people teach other believers. Further, some people do powerful things. Others can heal others, help other believers, guide the group of believers, or speak unknown languages. **29**Only some believers are those whom God has sent to represent the Messiah. Only some proclaim what God says. Only some teach other believers. Only some do powerful things. **30**Only some heal others. Only some speak unknown languages. Only some interpret {those unknown languages}. **31**Now I want you to eagerly seek the most beneficial gifts. Next, I will tell you about the very best thing you can do.

Chapter 13

1Imagine that I could speak many human and angelic languages, but I did not love others. I would be {able to make much noise,} like a loud metal instrument{, but I would not be helping anyone}. **2**Again, imagine that I could proclaim what God says, that I could comprehend and know everything, and that I believed so much that I could make mountains change places. But imagine further that I did not love others. Because of that, nothing else matters. **3**Yet again, imagine that I gifted everything I owned {to people who needed food}, and that I did not protect my own body, with the result that people would honor me. But imagine further that I did not love others. {Because I did not love others}, none of those things that I did help me at all.

4Those who love others wait patiently and act graciously. They do not wish that others would lose the good things that they have. They do not say great things about themselves or act like they are great. **5**They do not do shameful things. They do not care only about themselves. They do not quickly become angry. They do not keep track of what

others have done wrong. **6**They do not celebrate when people do bad things. Instead, they celebrate what is true. **7**They always put up with {others}. They always believe {that God will do what is best}, and they are always confident {that God will do what he has promised}. They always persevere {when bad things happen}.

8Those who love others never cease doing so. However, someday people will no longer proclaim what God says. Someday, people will stop speaking unknown languages. Someday, people will no longer know special things. **9**{These things will no longer happen,} because we know special things incompletely, and we proclaim what God says incompletely. **10**So, when we experience what is complete {when Jesus comes back}, what is incomplete will no longer matter. **11**{Here is an analogy:} when we were young, we talked as children talk. We thought as children think. We made decisions as children make decisions. But when we grew up, we stopped acting as children do. **12**Right now, we see {God} indirectly, as if we saw a reflection in a mirror. When {Jesus comes back}, however, {we will see God} in person. Right now, we know {God} incompletely. When {Jesus comes back}, however, we will know God just as much as he knows us. **13**In the end, there are three things that we will always keep doing. We will believe {in the Messiah}, confidently expect {God to do what he has promised}, and love {God and other people}. However, loving {God and others} is the most important out of these three things.

Chapter 14

1You should seek to love others always. Also, you should eagerly seek that the Holy Spirit specially empowers you, particularly that you might be able to proclaim what God says. **2**{You should desire this} because people who talk in unknown languages are talking with God, not with other people. {This is} because no one knows what they are saying. Rather, they say secret things as the Holy Spirit empowers them. **3**On the other hand, those who proclaim what God says do talk to other people. They help other believers become stronger, urge other believers to act in proper ways, and comfort other believers. **4**People who talk in unknown languages help themselves become stronger. On the other hand, people who proclaim what God says help the group of believers become stronger.

5I want all of you to talk in unknown languages. What I want even more, however, is that you might proclaim what God says. Proclaiming what God says is more important and helpful than talking in unknown languages. Of course, if someone explains {the unknown language}, then it {too} can help believers become stronger.

6Here {is what I am trying to say}, my fellow believers: imagine that I{, for example,} visited you, and I talked in unknown languages. I would not be helping you at all. To actually help you, I would need to reveal things {to you}, help you know things, proclaim what God says {to you}, or teach {you}. **7**Even things that are not alive but that we use to make sounds {illustrate what I am saying}. {When someone plays} a flute or a harp, the instrument must make various distinct sounds. Otherwise, no one would understand what a person plays on the flute or the harp, {since all the sounds would be the same}. **8**Further, suppose that a trumpet did not make clear sounds {when a person used it to warn others}. No one would know that they needed to get ready to fight the enemy. **9**Whenever you do not use words that other people recognize when you talk, you are like {an instrument that does not make a clear sound}. No one will comprehend what you are saying, and you will be {like} a person who talks to nobody. **10**It seems to be true that a great many varieties of languages exist. Every one of them communicates clearly. **11**So, when I{, for example,} do not understand how a language communicates, I am a stranger to everyone who speaks {that language}, and they are strangers to me. **12**So, here is what you must do: because you desire that the Holy Spirit specially empowers you, you should strive more and more {to use what the Holy Spirit empowers you to do} to help the group of believers become stronger.

13Therefore, those who talk in unknown languages should ask God to enable them to explain {what they are saying}. **14**When I{, for example,} pray {to God} in an unknown language, only part of me is praying since I am not thinking about what I am saying. **15**Therefore, here is what {you and I should do}. We should pray {to God} not only with just some parts of us but also by thinking about what we are saying. We should sing {to God} not only with just some parts of us but also by thinking about what we are singing. **16**Imagine that people who do not understand {unknown languages} hear you praising God when you are using just some parts of you{, and you are not thinking about what you are saying}. Those people will not be able to participate when you praise God because

they do not understand {the unknown language} that you are speaking. **17**In this situation, you praise God appropriately. However, you do not help other people become stronger. **18**I give thanks to God that I talk in unknown languages more than you all do. **19**However, when I gather together with fellow believers to worship God, I want to speak only a few words that I think about. In this way, I can teach other believers and {not just myself}. {It is better for me to do that} than {to say} a million words in an unknown language.

20My fellow believers, I do not want you to be foolish {about these things, like} little children {are}. Rather, you should know much {about these things, like} a fully grown adult {does}. You should {only} be {like} little children by not doing what is wrong. **21**The prophet Isaiah wrote in the Scriptures what the Lord says,

“I will talk to my people Israel

by means of people who speak foreign languages.

However, they will not listen to me in this way.”

22Therefore, talking in unknown languages signifies that God judges people who do not believe {in the Messiah}, not people who do believe {in the Messiah}. On the other hand, proclaiming what God says {signifies that God acts kindly toward} people who believe {in the Messiah}, not toward people who do not believe {in the Messiah}. **23**So, imagine that the whole group of believers gathered together to worship God, and all of you talked in unknown languages. Imagine further that people who do not understand {unknown languages} or who do not believe {in the Messiah} visit your group. They will tell {others} that you are crazy. **24**On the other hand, imagine that all of you proclaimed what God says. Imagine further that any people who do not believe {in the Messiah} or who do not understand {unknown languages} visit your group. Everything that you say will show them and confront them with {what they have done wrong}. **25**{In this way,} everyone will know the things that these {visitors} hide from others. In response, they will kneel down and worship God. They will proclaim {to others} that God truly is with you.

26My fellow believers, here is what I mean. Whenever you gather together {to worship God}, each believer {has something to do}. Some sing songs, others teach, others reveal things, others speak in an unknown language, others interpret an unknown language. Believers should do all these things to help other believers become stronger. **27**When believers are talking in unknown languages, only two or three at most {should speak}. They should talk one after the other, and someone needs to explain {what they are saying}. **28**On the other hand, when believers gather to worship God and a person who can explain the unknown language is not there, everyone who can talk in unknown languages should keep quiet. Instead {of talking out loud}, they should talk {in unknown languages} privately to God.

29Similarly, {around} two or three people who proclaim what God says should speak. Everyone else should decide whether {what they say} is correct or incorrect. **30**Now, whenever God reveals something to a person who is listening {to someone else proclaim what God says when believers gather together}, the person who is speaking should stop speaking. **31**{You should do that} so that everyone has a chance to proclaim what God says, one after the other. In that way, everyone learns something, and everyone becomes stronger. **32**Those who proclaim what God says control how and when they proclaim it. **33**{That is true} because what is peaceful and orderly, not what is disorderly, characterizes God.

{I want you to act} like all the {other} people whom God has set apart for himself act when they gather together to worship God. **34**Wives should keep quiet when believers gather together {and their husbands are speaking}. They should not talk but rather honor and obey {their husbands}. {They should do this} because that is what we find in {God’s} law. **35**Now, when wives want to learn more {about what their husbands are saying}, they should ask their husbands questions in their own houses. {They should do this} because wives who talk when believers gather together {and their husbands are speaking} shame {themselves and their families}. **36**{If you dislike what I have said,} remember that you are not the source of what God has said, and you are not the only ones who have heard {and believed what God has said}. **37**All people who consider themselves to be those who proclaim what God says or those whom the Holy Spirit has specially empowered must recognize that the Lord himself requires what I am

writing to you. [38]On the other hand, you should not recognize {as authoritative} any people who do not recognize {that the Lord requires what I have said}.

[39]In the end, my fellow believers, eagerly seek to proclaim what God says. Further, do not prohibit people from speaking unknown languages. [40]Finally, {when you gather together to worship God}, you should always act in honorable and orderly ways.

Chapter 15

[1]Next, I am informing you, fellow believers, about the good news that I told you about. You learned this good news {from me}, and you firmly believe it. [2]When you continue to firmly believe the message that I preached to you, God saves you by means of that message. Otherwise, you believed {the message} for nothing.

[3]Here is one of the first things that I told you, which I learned {from the Lord}: the Messiah died {on the cross} to take away our sins, just as {the authors of} the holy books {wrote}. [4]People buried him, but during the third day {after that}, God made him alive again, just as {the authors of} the holy books {wrote}. [5]He appeared to Peter and then to the {rest of Jesus'} 12 {closest followers}. [6]After that, he appeared at one time to greater than 500 fellow believers. Although some of these people have died, almost all of them are still alive. [7]After that, he appeared to James and then to everyone whom he sent to represent him. [8]Finally, after he appeared to all of them, he appeared to me also. So, {because I became one whom Jesus sent to represent him after everyone else}, I am like a baby that was born in an unusual way. [9]In fact, I am less significant and honorable than every other person whom the Messiah sent to represent him. Indeed, since I tried to destroy those who believe in the Messiah, I do not deserve it when others call me one whom the Messiah sent to represent him. [10]However, God graciously made me one whom the Messiah sent to represent him. Further, what he has given me has resulted in great things. In fact, I worked harder than all the other {ones whom the Messiah sent to represent him}. Of course, it was not really I {who worked so hard}. Instead, it was God graciously working through me {who did so much}. [11]In the end, both I and the other apostles proclaim the good news that I have described, and you trusted this good news.

[12]Because all believers say that God made the Messiah alive again, no one in your group should be claiming that people who have died will not live again. [13]Suppose {that it were true} that people who have died will not live again. {In that case,} God did not make the Messiah alive again. [14]Suppose {that it is true} that God did not make the Messiah alive again. In that case, it was for no reason that we proclaimed {the good news} and you believed it. [15]Further, we would be people who tell lies about God, because we declared before God that he made the Messiah alive again when he really did not. This would all be true were God not to make those who have died alive again. [16]{You can tell that this is true when you} suppose that God does not make people who have died alive again. {In that case,} God did not make even the Messiah alive again. [17]Suppose {that it is true} that God did not make the Messiah alive again. {In that case,} you believed {the good news} for no reason, and sin continues to control you. [18]In that case again, the believers who have died will never live again. [19]Suppose that we can confidently expect the Messiah {to help us} only before we die. {In that case,} all people should feel sorry for us more than {they feel sorry} for anyone else.

[20]But here is what is true: God has made the Messiah alive again, and he is the first of those who have died {whom God will make alive again}. [21]{You can tell that this is true,} because people die through what the one man {Adam} did. So also people who have died will live again through what the one man {Jesus} did. [22]What I mean is that, just as all people end up dying because God united them to Adam, in the same way all {believers} will live again because God unites them to the Messiah. [23]Now, all people {who will live again} do so in turn: first the Messiah and then those who belong to the Messiah when he comes {back again}. [24]After that, what everything that God has created is waiting for {will happen}. At that time, the Messiah will get rid of everyone and everything that rules and governs and controls. Then, he will present God, {who is our} Father, with the kingdom {so that God rules over everything}. [25]Here is how {that works}: God has decided that the Messiah will rule until whenever he has conquered all those who oppose him. [26]The last thing that opposes Christ that he will get rid of is that people die.

27Now, {David wrote,} “he made him conquer everything that opposes him.” Of course, “everything” does not include God, who is the one who “made him conquer everything.” **28**So, after he has conquered everything, then God the Son will submit to the one who made him conquer everything. In this way, God will conquer and rule all things.

29Now, consider people who baptize others to help those who are dead. Further, suppose again that God never makes people who have died alive again. {In that case,} there is no reason for people to baptize others to help those who have died. **30**Even more, {in that case,} there is no reason for we {who proclaim the good news} to constantly endanger ourselves {as we do}. **31**Indeed, I risk dying very frequently. I swear {that this is true} by how I boast about you, fellow believers, which I do because God has united all of us to the Messiah, {who is} Jesus our Lord. **32**Suppose that I was thinking about merely human things while I struggled against those who opposed me when I visited the city of Ephesus. {In that case, struggling against them} does not benefit me at all. Suppose again that God does not make people who have died alive again. {In that case,} we should {do what many people say to do}: eat {food}, and drink {wine}, because we will die very soon. **33**You should not believe what is wrong. {This popular saying is true:} “Evil friends lead astray a person who normally does what is proper.” **34**I want you to start acting alertly and properly. You should not keep doing what is wrong. {I command these things} because some people in your group do not know God. I say that in order to make you feel ashamed

35Now a person may ask about the way in which the people who have died live again and about what form they will take. **36**{If you do not know the answers to those questions,} you are not thinking clearly! {Just think about this:} a seed that you put in the ground must die before it can grow. **37**{Speaking about} a seed that you put in the ground, {you know that} it is not in the form of the plant. Rather, it is just the seed. This is true whether {we are speaking about} wheat or some other crop. **38**Indeed, God makes seeds grow into the forms that he chooses, and each kind of seed has a specific form {into which it grows}. **39**The physical parts of different living beings vary. For example, humans, mammals, birds, and fish all have different kinds of physical parts. **40**Some things exist in heaven, and other things exist on earth. The forms of things in heaven are glorious in one way, while the forms of things on earth are glorious in another way. **41**{Further,} the sun, moon, and stars are glorious in different ways. In fact, each star is glorious in its own specific way.

42Here is the way {all that applies to how} people who have died live again. People put a decaying body into the ground, but God makes it alive again so that it can never die. **43**People put a body that receives no respect into the ground, but God makes it alive again so that everyone respects it. People put a frail body into the ground, but God makes it alive again so that it is strong. **44**People put a body that belongs to this world into the ground, but God makes it alive again so that it belongs to the world that God will renew. Just as some bodies belong to this world, so some bodies belong to the world that God will renew.

45{You can tell that this is true} because Moses wrote, “God made the first human, Adam, as a living being who belonged to this world.” {On the other hand, Jesus, who is like} another Adam, now belongs to the world that God will renew and gives life to others. **46**Now {the first Adam’s} body that belongs to this world existed first, and only after that does {the last Adam’s body} exist that belongs to the world that God will renew. **47**{Adam, who represents} the first {kind of} human, belonged on the earth. {In fact,} God made him from dust. {On the other hand, Jesus, who represents} the second {kind of} human, belongs in heaven. **48**All people who belong on the earth are like Adam. All those who belong in heaven are like Jesus. **49**Our bodies currently are like {Adam’s body} that belongs to this world. In the same way, we should live in such a way that our bodies will eventually be like {Jesus’ body,} which belongs to the world that God will renew.

50Listen to this, my fellow believers: human bodies as they currently exist cannot participate in God’s kingdom that lasts forever, since they fall apart and die. **51**Pay attention! I am going to tell you something that God has now revealed. Not all of us will die, but God will transform all of us. **52**{He will transform us} in one moment, as fast as a person blinks an eye. {This will happen} when {an angel blows} the trumpet that signals that this world is ending. When {an angel} blows that trumpet, God will make those who have died live again so that they can never die, and he will transform everyone who still lives. **53**So, bodies that fall apart and die need to transform into bodies that last

forever and can never die. **54**When our bodies that fall apart and die transform into bodies that last forever and can never die, at that time what the prophets wrote about will finally happen:

“God has made it so that people no longer die.”

55{Further,}

“When people die, this does not destroy or hurt them.”

56People die because sin causes them to die, and that happens because the law specifies dying as the penalty for sin. **57**However, I praise God because he has enabled us to conquer {how we sin and die}. {He has done this} by means of what our Lord, Jesus the Messiah, has done.

58So then, fellow believers whom I love, firmly believe {what you know is true}. Consistently serve the Lord more and more. {You should do these things} because you know that what you do {to serve the Lord} will result in great things, since God has united you to the Lord.

Chapter 16

1I am now moving on to speak about the money that I am collecting for God’s people {who are Jewish}. I want you to do what I instructed the groups of believers {who live} in the region of Galatia to do. **2**During each Sunday, every one of you should take some money out of whatever you have earned and save it. That way, I will not need to collect money when I visit you. **3**Choose some trustworthy people from your group. When I visit you, I will have them take the money {that you have collected} to the city of Jerusalem. Also, I will give them letters {that say that I have authorized them}. **4**You and I may decide that I should go {to Jerusalem} as well. In that case, the people {whom you choose} will travel with me.

5I am going to visit you after I travel through the region of Macedonia, which is the way I will be traveling. **6**In fact, I may spend some time with you, maybe the whole winter. That way, you can assist me in traveling to wherever I decide to go next. **7**{I am making these plans} because I would rather wait to be with you for a long time than visit you right now for just a short time. I confidently expect to do this as long as it is what the Lord wants {me to do}. **8**For now, I plan on remaining here in the city of Ephesus until the Pentecost festival. **9**{I am remaining here} because God has allowed me to effectively and freely proclaim the good news. {Further, I need to resist} the large number of people who are working against me.

10Whenever Timothy arrives {in your city}, make sure that he feels safe when he is with you. {You should do this} because he serves the Lord {by proclaiming the good news}, just like I do. **11**So, do not treat him disrespectfully. Rather, act in a friendly way by assisting him in traveling back to me. {You should do this} because I anticipate that he will come back to me with the other believers {who are traveling to visit me}.

12I am now moving on to speak about our fellow believer, Apollos. I firmly urged him to visit you with the other believers {who were traveling to visit you}. However, he firmly decided that it was not the right time to visit you. Instead, he will visit you when he thinks that it is the right time.

13Watch out {for what is wrong}! Firmly believe {the good news}! Be courageous! Be determined! **14**You should focus on loving others whenever you think or do anything.

15You know that those who live in the house of Stephanas were the first people {to believe the good news} in the region of Achaia. Further, they have chosen to serve God’s people. I ask you, my fellow believers, **16**to honor and obey them and other people like them. In fact, {you should honor and obey} every person who works hard {to proclaim the good news} with us. **17**I am happy that Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus arrived here. {That is}

because they have allowed me to connect with you all even when you are not with me. **18**They encouraged and energized both me and you. Therefore, you should honor them and other people like them.

19The groups of believers here in the region of Asia say hello to you. Aquila and Priscilla, as those whom God has also united to the Lord, say hello to you affectionately. The believers that gather in their house {also say hello to you}. **20**All the fellow believers {who are with me} say hello to you. Welcome each other in a loving way.

21I, Paul, say hello {to you}. I am writing {these last words} myself {instead of having my scribe write them}. **22**May God curse everyone who fails to love the Lord. I pray that the Lord returns soon. **23**{I pray that} the Lord Jesus will be gracious to you. **24**I continue to love all of you, since God has united us together with Jesus the Messiah. May it be so!

2 Corinthians

Chapter 1

1{I,} Paul, {write this letter to you,} and Timothy, our fellow believer, {is with me}. God chose to send me to represent the Messiah Jesus, because that is what God wanted. {I send this letter} to {you who are part of} the group of believers belonging to God, which is in the city of Corinth. {I} also {send this letter} to all the believers who live throughout the region of Achaia. **2**{May} God, {who is} our Father, and the Lord Jesus the Messiah {continue to be} kind to you and {make you} peaceful.

3May we always praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah—he is our merciful Father and our God who always comforts us. **4**God comforts us whenever we suffer. He does that so that we can comfort others who are suffering in any way. God enables us to comfort them in the very same way as he comforts us. **5**You see, the Messiah suffered a lot for us, and now we continue to suffer as the Messiah did because we belong to him. But now the Messiah also comforts us in the same abundant amount. **6**So whenever people cause us to suffer, it is so that God may comfort you and protect you spiritually. Whenever God comforts us, it is so that he may also comfort you. God does this as you patiently endure when people cause you to suffer just as people cause us to suffer. **7**We know that God will also comfort you as you suffer like we suffer. Therefore, we are very confident that you will continue {trusting in Jesus}.

8For example, fellow believers, we want you to know about the bad things that happened to us in the province of Asia. They were so difficult that we felt that we could not endure them. We felt certain that we were going to die. **9**We felt like a person feels when he has heard a judge say, “I condemn you to die.” But God allowed us to feel that way so that we would learn to not rely on ourselves but, instead, to rely on God. He causes people who have died to live again. **10**Even though it seemed to us that we would certainly die, God rescued us from the people who wanted to kill us, and he will continue to rescue us {from similar people}. We confidently expect that he will rescue us again **11**as you help us by praying for us. Please do pray for us so that many people will thank God for what he will graciously do for us because many people prayed for us.

12We are proud that we can honestly say that we have behaved toward all people in a holy and sincere way, as God has enabled us to do. We do not behave in the way that unbelievers think is wise. Instead, God graciously guides us, especially {as we interact} with you. **13**To see this, look at my letters. In all of my letters to you I have written only what you can {easily} read and understand. I hope that {soon} you will understand {us} completely **14**just as you partially understand us {already}. Then when our Lord Jesus returns, you will be just as proud of us as we will be proud of you.

15-16 Because I was confident that you were proud of me, I planned to visit you once on my way to the province of Macedonia, and then to visit you again as I returned from there. In that way, you would benefit twice from having me with you. Also, you could help supply what I would need to go from your city to the province of Judea. **17**I intended to visit you those two times{, but then I did not come the second time}. That does not mean that I changed my plan lightly. I do not make or change my plans according to what I might desire at the time. I do not say, “Yes, I will do that” and then quickly say, “No, I will not do it.” **18**Just as God is faithful, we are completely sincere in everything that we say to you. We would never say, “Yes” when we really think, “No.” **19**I and Silvanus and Timothy taught you about the Son of God, Jesus the Messiah. {You know that} he would never say, “Yes” if what he meant was, “No.” Because of who he is, our message about him has also remained consistent and dependable. **20**Because of Jesus, we can rely on all of the promises of God. Jesus fulfills them all. Therefore, Jesus is also the one who enables us to say, “Yes, it is true” when we praise God. **21**It is God who causes us, along with you, to keep on believing strongly in the Messiah. God is also the one who has given us his Spirit so that we can serve him. **22**God

gave us the Holy Spirit to live within us. That shows both that we belong to him and that he will also do for us everything else that he has promised to do for us.

23So now I will tell you why I changed my mind and did not visit you again as I intended to do. May God strike me dead if I am lying, but he knows that what I am telling you is true. The reason that I did not return to Corinth was so that I might not grieve you by having to speak to you severely about the wrong things that you have done. **24**When I say that, I do not mean that we are your masters who give you orders about what to believe and do. Instead, everything that we tell you {about living for God} is so that you will be joyful. We do not need to command you, because God himself tells you what to believe and do.

Chapter 2

1{I have not visited you} because I have chosen to avoid visiting you if it hurts you and me like it did last time {I visited you}. **2**{I chose not to visit you again} because, when I hurt you, I have hurt the only people who can make me glad. **3**I already wrote {in my previous letter} what I am now saying {to you}. {I wrote those things} so that, when I next visited you, you would not hurt me, and I would be glad about you as I should. {I wrote those things because} I was sure about all of you that you would be glad when I was glad. **4**I suffered greatly and hurt inside when I wrote {that previous letter} to you. In fact, I wept {while I wrote it}. {I sent it to you} so that you would realize how much I care for you. I did not intend to hurt you.

5However, the person who has hurt others did not really hurt me. Rather, that person hurt some {of you}. {I use the word “some”} so that I do not include all of you {as those whom that person hurt}. **6**Most of you together have disciplined that person. {You do not need to do} anything more. **7**So then, instead {of disciplining that person}, you should now forgive and encourage that person. Otherwise, the person will become very sad and give up.

8Therefore, I encourage you to show publicly that you care for that person. **9**Another reason for which I wrote {that previous letter} was in order that I could find out for sure if you would do everything that I asked {you to do}. **10**In the end, when you forgive any person for anything, I too forgive that person. In fact, I have forgiven {that person} for what {that person did}, even though it was basically nothing. {I did that} to help you, as the Messiah desires. **11**{We should forgive others} so that Satan will not control us. Indeed, we know all about his plans {to control us}.

12{To return to how I traveled,} when I arrived in the city of Troas, the Lord Jesus made it possible for me to proclaim the good news about the Messiah effectively. **13**However, since my fellow believer Titus was not {in the city of Troas}, I continued to be anxious about {what happened when he visited you}. Therefore, I said goodbye to the believers there and left to travel to the region of Macedonia.

14Now we praise God! {He is the one} who, because he has united us to the Messiah, continually includes us as he conquers {his enemies}. Further, he uses us to reveal to people in many places what God is like. **15**In fact, we are like a pleasant smell that comes from Christ and that pleases God. {We are like this smell} when we are with people whom God is rescuing and when we are with people who are passing away. **16**Those {who are passing away think that we are like} a smell that comes from a dead body and that causes people to die. On the other hand, those {whom God is rescuing think that we are like} a smell that comes from a living thing and that causes people to live. No one can perfectly {proclaim the good news in that way}! **17**{You can tell that we do not do so perfectly} because we do not sell the message that God has given us for money, like many other people do. Rather, we only want to serve God, not to gain something. Indeed, {we proclaim the good news} because that is what God sent us {to do}. So, as those whom God has united to the Messiah, we proclaim {the good news} to please God{, not people}.

Chapter 3

1We are not going to prove to you a second time that we are trustworthy. As you know, you do not need to write or receive a note that proves that we are trustworthy, even though {you might need to do those things} for other

people. [2]It is you all who function like a note {that proves that we are trustworthy}. When we care for each other, all people realize that we are trustworthy, just as if they read {a note from you}. [3]Everyone knows that you are like a note that the Messiah wrote and that we delivered. {The Messiah} did not write {this note} on stone slabs using dye. Rather, {it is as if he wrote it} inside you by working through the Holy Spirit, {who is} the only real God.

[4]I say those things because we are sure about {what} God {thinks of us}. {We are sure} because the Messiah makes {us sure}. [5]Of course, we cannot {proclaim the good news} well on our own, and we do not think that anything we do well is because of us. Rather, God enables us {to proclaim the good news} well. [6]He has also enabled us to act on behalf of the new agreement. The Holy Spirit gives {this new agreement}, so it is not just words that someone wrote down. {This is important} because {people who rely on} the Holy Spirit will live, but {people who rely on} words that someone wrote down will die.

[7]Further, when Moses acted on behalf of {the old agreement that condemned people} to die, God carved the words {of the agreement} onto stone slabs. What Moses did was glorious enough that the Israelites could not gaze at his face afterwards because it {reflected how} glorious {God is}, although that would eventually go away. [8]So then, when people act on behalf of {the new agreement that gives} the Holy Spirit, that is even more glorious. [9]Indeed, when Moses acted on behalf of {the old agreement that led to God} condemning people, it was glorious. So then, when people act on behalf of {the new agreement that leads to people becoming} righteous, it is even more glorious! [10]In fact, the glorious {old agreement} does not look glorious at all because of how glorious {the new agreement} is. [11]Indeed, {the old agreement} that is going away was glorious. So then, {the new agreement} that will last forever is even more glorious!

[12]So then, since we confidently expect {to receive} these {glorious} things, we behave very boldly. [13]{We are} not like Moses, who wore a cloth that hid his face. That way, the Israelites could not gaze at how his face stopped reflecting how glorious God is. [14]In fact, the Israelites did not understand {what God revealed}. Indeed, even now, when someone reads {the Scriptures that contain} the old agreement, {it is as if} the cloth that Moses wore keeps people from understanding {it}. That is because no one can understand {these Scriptures} until God unites them to the Messiah. [15]Indeed, even now, when someone reads the Law of Moses, it is as if that cloth keeps people from understanding it. [16]However, when people begin to trust the Lord {God}, God enables them to understand {the Law of Moses}, just as if he removed that cloth. [17]When I speak of the Lord {God}, I mean the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who enables {people to understand the Scriptures}. [18]So, all of us {who believe} show how glorious the Lord {God} is, and {we do so} without a cloth covering our faces. God is changing us so that we are like {the Messiah}. In this way, the glorious Lord, who is the Holy Spirit, makes us glorious.

Chapter 4

[1]Because of those things, and because God mercifully enabled us to act on behalf of {the new agreement}, we do not give up. [2]Rather, we refuse to do anything that we would hide because it is disgraceful. We do not try to deceive others, and we do not change the message from God. Instead, we proclaim the true {message}, and we prove to everyone that God considers us trustworthy. [3]In fact, the only people who do not understood the good news that we proclaim are people who are passing away. [4]Satan, who rules the world right now, has kept these people who do not believe from understanding. That way, the good news about the glorious Messiah, who shows what God is like, does not change them. [5]{I say that the good news is about the Messiah} because we do not tell other people about ourselves. Rather, {we tell them} about Jesus the Messiah, the Lord, and about how we serve you because of him. [6]{We do that} because it is God who spoke these words: “What is dark will become bright.” He has enabled us to understand what is true about how glorious he is, just as if he had shined a light on us. {God has revealed this} in Jesus the Messiah.

[7]We experience and proclaim these wonderful things, but we ourselves are weak and worthless. That way, {it is clear that} God causes these things to be so powerful, not we. [8]{We experience} many {difficult things}. People persecute us, but they do not overcome us. We are not sure what to do, but we do not give up. [9]People try to hurt

us, but God does not abandon us. People act against us, but they do not defeat us. **10**We continually suffer physically, like Jesus did. That way, God will make us live again, just like he made Jesus live again. **11**Indeed, while we are living, God allows us to suffer continually because of Jesus. That way, even though we will die, God will make us live again, just like he made Jesus live again. **12**As you can see, God allows us to suffer, but he will make you live.

13Now we are those who trust {God}, just like the person who wrote {in the psalm}, "I trusted {God}, so I spoke." We too trust {God}, so we too speak. **14**{We do that because} we realize that God made Jesus alive again, so he will also make us alive again. Then we will be with Jesus and with you before God. **15**We do each of those things to help you. That way, God will act graciously to more people. Then, people will thank God more, which honors God.

16Therefore, we do not give up. Instead, even though the part of us that people can see is perishing, every day God is strengthening the part of us that people cannot see. **17**{We do not give up,} because when we suffer in temporary and unimportant ways, that will cause us to become glorious forever and in important ways, ways that we cannot even imagine. **18**So, we pay attention to what we do not see rather than to what we see. {That is} because what we do not see will last forever, but what we see will pass away.

Chapter 5

1Indeed, we realize that the bodies we have on this earth will die. They are like tents that people destroy. However, God will give us new bodies that will live forever. They will be like buildings that God creates in the heavenly places. **2**In fact, we mourn how we live in these bodies. We want God to give us new bodies, just as if he was putting new clothes on us. {These new bodies will be like} buildings {that God gives us} from heaven. **3**Whenever we receive our new bodies, they will be like clothes that keep us from being naked.

4Even further, while we have these bodies that are like tents, we mourn, and these bodies make living difficult. Because of that, it is not that we want to be without bodies, which would be like having no clothes. Rather, {we want} to receive new bodies, which will be like putting on new clothes. That way, we will live forever instead of expecting to die. **5**God is the one who makes us ready for these new bodies. He gave the Holy Spirit to us, which shows that he will also give us everything else that he has promised.

6So then, we are confident at all times {about what God will give us}. Also, we realize that while we have these bodies, we are not with the Lord {Jesus}. **7**Indeed, we act as we do because we trust {the Lord Jesus}, not because we see {him}. **8**As I said, we are confident {about what God will give us}. Also, we would choose instead to be without our bodies and with the Lord {Jesus}. **9**So then, we strive to please the Lord Jesus whether we are with him or not. **10**{We do that} because all of us will have to appear before the Messiah and he will decide whether each one of us has done what is right or what is wrong. Then, he will give us what we deserve in proportion to what we did while we had these bodies.

11So then, because we experience what it means to fear the Lord {Jesus}, we convince others {to fear him also}. God knows {that we are trustworthy}, and I want you also to know {that we are trustworthy}. **12**We are not proving to you a second time that we are trustworthy. Rather, we are enabling you to say great things about us. That way, you can respond to anybody who says great things about how people appear on the outside and not about who those people really are on the inside. **13**So, when we seem crazy, we are serving God. When we seem to think normally, we are serving you. **14**{Those things are true} because the Messiah loves us, and that directs us {to act in certain ways}. Here is how we think about it: one person{, the Messiah,} died to rescue all people. Because of that, {it is as if} all people died. **15**Further, {this is why} he died to rescue all people: that way, those who live spiritually will not do whatever they want anymore. Instead, {they will do} what the Messiah wants, since he died to rescue them and God made him alive again.

16Because of all that, we do not think about anyone in merely human ways any longer. Indeed, although at one time we thought about the Messiah in merely human ways, we do not think about him in those ways any longer. **17**So then, whenever God unites people to the Messiah, he makes them new people. What they used to be has

disappeared. Look, what they are now is something new! **18**God is the one who gives us every one of these things. By working through the Messiah, he has enabled us to be with him. Further, God empowers us to act so that others can also be with him. **19**Here is how that works: God works through Christ to enable every person to be with him. In doing so, he forgives people for what they have done wrong. Further, he commissions us to tell others about how they can be with God.

20Because {God has commissioned us}, we represent the Messiah. So, God encourages others through us. We speak for the Messiah when we ask you {to believe the good news so that} you can be with God. **21**Jesus did not sin. {Despite that,} for our sake God treated him as if he had sinned. As a result, God makes us righteous by uniting us to Jesus.

Chapter 6

1As those who serve with God, we encourage you to accept fully what God has graciously done {for you}, so that it changes {how you live}. **2**{You should do that} because God says {in the scripture}:

“When I considered it to be the right time, I heard you {and acted}.

Indeed, when I was rescuing {people}, I assisted you.”

Right now is when God considers it to be the best time! Indeed, right now is when God is rescuing {people}!

3We avoid doing anything that might offend others. That way, no one can criticize how we serve {God}. **4**Rather, we prove that we are trustworthy in every way while we serve God. We always persevere when people hurt and persecute us. **5**{We persevere} when people strike us, put us in jail, and stir up crowds against us. {We persevere} when we work hard, do not sleep much, and go hungry. **6**We are free from evil things, we know {what is true}, and we do not easily become angry. We care {for others}, we have the Holy Spirit, and we love {people} sincerely. **7**We proclaim what is true, and God enables us to act powerfully. We are righteous, which is like having a sword in one hand and a shield in the other. **8**Some people honor us, and others shame us. Some people say bad things about us, and others say good things about us. Some people think that we tell lies, but really we speak what is true. **9**Some people think that nobody acknowledges us, but really, God acknowledges us. Some people think that we are dying, but really, we are alive! Some people think that God is punishing us, but really, he has not decided that we should die. **10**Some people think that we mourn, but really, we continually rejoice. Some people think that we are needy, but really, we help many people gain what is truly valuable. Some people think that we do not have anything, but really, we have everything.

11Fellow believers in the city of Corinth, we have told you what is true, and we care for you greatly. **12**We are not the ones who have stopped {caring for you}. Rather, it is you who have stopped caring {for us}. **13**Now I will speak to you {as if you thought in simple ways} like children {do}: since we care for you, it would only be right if you cared for us in return.

14Do not join in with people who do not trust {the Messiah}. {I say that} because what is right and what is wrong have nothing in common. Further, what is good shares nothing with what is evil. **15**The Messiah does not agree {about anything} with the devil Beliar. Further, people who trust {the Messiah} do not belong with people who do not trust {the Messiah}. **16**God’s temple does not go together with other gods. In fact, it is as if we {who believe} were the only real God’s temple. {You can tell that we are God’s temple} because God spoke {these words in the Scriptures}:

“I will be with my people.

Indeed, I will not leave them.

They will consider me to be their God

and I will consider them to be my people.”

17So then, {we should do what} the Lord {God} says {in the Scriptures}:

“Get away from people {who do not serve me}.

Make sure that you are different {than them}.

Stay away from anything that defiles you.”

{He says,} “Then, I will gladly receive you.”

18Further, the Lord {God}, who rules all things, says,

“I will be your father.

You will be my sons and daughters.”

Chapter 7

1So then, {fellow believers} whom I love, because God has promised these things to us, we should get rid of everything that defiles us on the outside and on the inside. We should become completely holy as we fear God.

2{We ask you to} care for us! We have not hurt, cheated, or destroyed anyone. **3**I am not saying these things to blame you. In fact, as I have already written {in this letter}, we care for you greatly, no matter what happens. **4**I am very confident {that} you {will do what is right}. {In fact,} I often say great things about you. You encourage me greatly, and I rejoice very much {about you} even while we are suffering.

5Now to return {to how I traveled}, when we arrived in Macedonia, things did not get easier for us. Instead, we suffered in many ways. Other people quarreled with us, and we ourselves were often afraid. **6**However, God encourages people who feel discouraged. He encouraged us by having Titus join {us}. **7**{God encouraged us} partly by having Titus join {us}, but even more by how what you did encourages Titus. He has told us that you want {to see me}, that you are sorry {for what you did}, and that you strive to honor me. Because of those things, I rejoiced more {than I did before}.

8I am not sorry {that I wrote the previous letter}, even though I hurt you with what I wrote. In fact, the only reason I would be sorry {that I wrote it} is that I know that the letter hurt you, although only for a little while. **9**However, now {that Titus has told us about you,} I am very happy. {I am happy} not because I hurt you. Rather, {I am happy} because when I hurt you, you became sorry {for what you did} and stopped {doing it}. In fact, you felt hurt in a way that honors God. So, we have not deprived you of anything good. **10**{That is} because, when people feel hurt in a way that honors God, it causes them to be sorry {for what they did} and stop {doing it}. They are not sorry {that they felt hurt}, because {God uses how they feel} to rescue them. However, when people feel hurt in the way that most people do, {how they feel} eventually causes them to die. **11**As for you, when you felt hurt in this way that honors God, it certainly caused you to be very eager {to do what is right}. You argued that you were not guilty. You were upset {about what had happened}. You feared {what might happen}. You wanted {to see us}. You strove to honor {us}. You punished {the person who had done what was wrong}. By doing all {those things}, you have shown that you have done what is right in response to what happened. **12**So then, when I sent {the previous letter} to you, I was not primarily dealing with the person who did what was wrong. Also, I was not primarily dealing with the person whom he hurt. Rather, I intended to show you how eager you are {to act rightly} toward us and that God approves {of this}. **13**Since you responded in these ways, you have encouraged us.

In fact, although you did encourage us, we are even more happy about how you made Titus happy. {You did that} when you all comforted and strengthened him. **14**{We were this happy} because you did not disgrace me after I had said great things about you to Titus. Instead, Titus found out that the great things we said about you were actually true. {This is} just like how everything we told you was also true. **15**Titus recalls how you all obeyed us,

particularly how you feared him when he arrived. {Because of that,} he cares about you even more now. **16**I am happy that I am completely sure that you {are doing what is right}.

Chapter 8

1My fellow believers, we want to tell you about what God has graciously enabled the groups of believers {here} in Macedonia province to do. **2**Even though they suffered very much, which tested {how they would respond}, they were extremely generous. They were very joyful {as they did this}, even though they had very little. **3**In fact, I can tell you that {they offered} as much as they could afford, and even more than they could afford. They were the ones who chose to do this. **4**They were very insistent when they urged us to accept {what they were giving}. They wanted to share in serving God's people. **5**Further, they did even more than what we had expected. They dedicated themselves primarily to {serving} the Lord {Jesus} and then also to {serving} us. {That is} just what God wants. **6**Because of that, we encouraged Titus to finish accepting what you are giving, especially since he had already started {doing so}. **7**As for you, you are already doing well in so many ways. {This includes} how you trust {God}, what you say, how much you know, how you are always eager {to do what is right}, and how much we love you. So, you should also do well in giving {money for fellow believers}.

8I am not ordering you {to give money}. Rather, I want to show that you really care {for fellow believers} by comparing {what you do} with how other people are always eager {to give money}. **9**{You should be eager to give money} because you realize that our Lord, Jesus the Messiah, kindly gave up everything he had to help you. {He did that even though} he had very many things. He wanted to give you many things by himself giving up what he had.

10I am telling you what I think about giving money, because hearing what I think helps you. Last year, you both wanted to and did start {giving money}. **11**Right now, you should finish what you started. That way, what you finish doing matches what you eagerly wanted {to do}, {which is to give some} of what you have. **12**Now God approves of {what people give} based on what they have, not based on what they do not have. {This is true} as long as they are eager {to give}.

13So, it is not that I want you to suffer while other believers do well. Rather, I want {believers to share what they have} equally. **14**Right now, how much you have can help people who do not have much. Then, when those people have much and you have little, they can help you. That way, believers share {what they have} equally. **15**{We want it to be} like what someone wrote {when God powerfully gave food to the Israelites}:

"The people who had much did not have more than they needed.

The people who had little did not have less than they needed."

16We thank God for causing Titus to be eager {to care} for you, just like we are. **17**Indeed, he is visiting you partly because he listened to us urging him {to do so}. Mostly, however, {he is visiting you} because he is so eager {to care for you} that he himself chose {to visit you}. **18**We have chosen a fellow believer to go with Titus. Many groups of believers commend him {because of what he does} for the sake of the good news. **19**More than that, the groups of believers selected him to travel with me. He is helping us as we work to accept {money for the believers in Jerusalem}. {Accepting this money} honors the Lord {God} and demonstrates how eager we are {to care for fellow believers}.

20So, we are doing what we can to keep others from criticizing us for what we do {with this money} that people have generously given. **21**As you can see, before {we started to collect this money}, we planned how to do it well. {We considered} what the Lord {God} thinks, but we also {considered} what other people think.

22We have chosen another fellow believer to go with Titus and the other man {I have been speaking about}. We have tested him and know for sure that he is eager {to serve God}. In fact, because he is very confident that you {will do what is right}, right now he is particularly eager {to serve with you}. **23**{I recommend these men.} Titus joins me {in what I do} and works with me to help you. The groups of believers send the other two fellow believers, and

they honor the Messiah. **24**So then, show these three men and also the groups of believers that you really do care {for fellow believers} and that the great things we say about you really are true.

Chapter 9

1Really, though, I do not need to say anything to you about how we are serving God's people {in Jerusalem}. **2**{That is} because I recognize how eager you are {to give}. In fact, I say great things about you to the believers in Macedonia province. {I tell them} that you believers in Achaia province were already preparing {to give} last year. How eager you were {to give} has encouraged most of them {to give also}. **3**However, {although we know that you are eager}, we have chosen these {three} fellow believers to visit you to make sure that the great things we say about how you are eager {to give} prove true. {They are visiting you} so that you can finish preparing {to give} and in this way match what I have told {the Macedonians about you}. **4**On the other hand, {think about what would happen} were some believers from Macedonia province to visit you with me and discover that you had not finished preparing {to give}. How you had acted would shame even us, and {it would} most definitely {shame} you. **5**Because of that, I decided that I needed to ask these {three} fellow believers to visit you before {I do} and help you with what you said you would give. That way, you will have already prepared what you are giving, and {you will offer it} because you want to and not because we are making you do it.

6Here is an example {that illustrates how you should give}. When farmers plant only a few seeds, they harvest only a little food. When farmers plant many seeds, they harvest much food. Much like that, when you help other people, someone will help you in return. **7**Each of you should choose for yourself {how much to give}. Do not {choose how much to give} because you feel hurt or because you have to. {I say that} because God cares for people who give gladly. **8**God can graciously give you more than you need. That way, because you always have everything you need in every situation, you can always do everything that is right. **9**{You can tell that is true} because someone wrote {about this kind of person} in the Scriptures,

"They give to many people.

Yes, they help those who have very little.

They will do what is right forever."

10God provides the seeds for the one who plants them, and {he provides} food for people to eat. So, he will also provide what you need and give you more of it. Further, when you do what is right, he will use that to accomplish good things. **11**God consistently gives you more than you need so that you can always generously {give to others}. When you give generously and we send your gifts {to fellow believers}, they thank God.

12In fact, when you serve God's people {in Jerusalem} by giving {to them}, it provides what they need. Even more, though, it causes them to thank God very much. **13**You prove yourselves by serving God's people {in Jerusalem}. So then, they will honor God because you actually do what the good news about the Messiah requires, {which is the same good news} that you say you believe. {They will honor God} also because you generously share {what you have} with them and with all {believers}. **14**Further, they will want {to see} you as they pray for you, since you give very graciously as God enables you to. **15**We thank God for giving us these things that are more wonderful than we can say!

Chapter 10

1Now I {will speak about} myself, Paul. I am humbly and reasonably urging you {to do what is right}, just like the Messiah {was humble and reasonable}. {Some people say that} when I was with you in person, I was gentle with you, but now, when I am away, I am forceful with you. **2**I do intend to be forceful when I boldly act against these people who think that I and those {who serve} with me act in merely human ways. So, I ask you {to do what is right} so that I will not need to be forceful with you too when I visit you. **3**In fact, although we act as humans, we do

not defend ourselves in merely human ways. [4]In fact, what we use to defend ourselves is not what humans normally use. Rather, God empowers {what we use to defend ourselves} so that we can defeat what other people powerfully argue. [5]{We} also {defeat} anything that people claim is greater than knowing God. Further, we work to influence everything that people think so that they obey the Messiah. [6]At the time when you fully obey {the Messiah}, we will be ready to punish anyone who disobeys {him}.

[7]Think about what is obvious. Suppose that people are sure that they represent the Messiah. Those people need to remember that we too represent the Messiah, just like they do. [8]Indeed, I do not disgrace myself when I say many great things about how the Lord {Jesus} has empowered us to represent him. {He did that} so that we could encourage and help you {to trust God more}, not so that we could discourage you {from trusting God}. [9]So, {you can tell that} I am not trying to scare you when I send {forceful} letters to you. [10]{I write that} because some people say {about me}, “He sends severe and powerful letters to us, but he is feeble and speaks very poorly when he is with us.” [11]People who say those things need to realize that what we write in our letters {to you} when we are not with you is also how we act when we are with you.

[12]We are too humble to say that we are as good as people {you know} who say that they are trustworthy. Those people are foolish. {When they say that they are great,} they are looking only at themselves. [13]In contrast, we do not say great things about ourselves beyond what we actually do. Rather, {we say great things about ourselves} that match with what God has given us to do. That includes what we do whenever we are with you. [14]In fact, only if we had not actually visited you would {what God has given us to do} not include you. Of course, we really have already visited you {and told you} the good news about the Messiah.

[15]We do not say great things about ourselves because of what others do but because of what we actually do. In fact, we confidently expect that God will give us even more to do with you. {That will happen} when you trust {God} more. [16]That way, we can tell the good news to people who live even further away from us than you do. {That is what we plan to do} instead of saying great things about ourselves because of how other people have done what God has given them to do. [17]{Everyone should do what the prophet Jeremiah wrote,}

“Anyone who says great things should say them about the Lord {God}.”

[18]{Everyone should do that} because the Lord {Jesus} recommends those whom he says are trustworthy, not those who say that about themselves.

Chapter 11

[1]{Next,} I hope that you will be patient with me as I say a few things {that I consider} foolish. I know that you are patient with me! [2]{I will say foolish things} because I am protective of you as God is protective of you. In fact, when I told you the good news, I was like a father who promised to give you to a man as his wife. Just like this father wants his daughter to be with only this one man, so I want you to trust only in the Messiah. [3]However, I fear that someone {will trick you}, just as Satan cleverly tricked Eve{, the first woman}. {I fear that such a person} will ruin how you think in ways that are completely loyal to the Messiah. [4]{I fear for you} because {I know that} people visit you and tell you about Jesus, but it is not the same Jesus we told you about. Others offer you a spirit, but it is not the Holy Spirit that we offered to you. Others proclaim good news to you, but it is not the same good news that you first believed. Despite that, you are very patient {when people tell you about these things}.

[5]{I want you to believe what we first told you} because I think that the Messiah acts through me as much as through those who say that they represent him the best. [6]Although I have not learned how to speak very well, despite that, {I have learned} to know {what is true}. I show you that this is true whenever I say or do anything.

[7]You know that I did not sin against you when I did not ask you to pay me for proclaiming to you the good news from God. {By doing that,} I made myself less important to make you more important. [8]{In fact,} I received money from other groups of believers. I accepted their money so that I could serve you. [9]Further, when I was with you, I

did not have everything that I needed. However, I did not bother any of you {by asking for money}. {I could do that} because our fellow believers who traveled {with me} from Macedonia province gave me everything that I needed. Indeed, in every situation, I did not and never will bother you {by asking for money for myself}. **10**No one who lives in any part of Achaia province will be able to keep me from saying great things {about how I did not bother you}. What I am saying is as true as if the Messiah were saying it. **11**My reason for {not bothering you} is not that I do not care for you. God can testify {that I do care for you}.

12Rather, {here is my reason for why} I will continue not to bother you. That way, I can prevent anyone from being able to say such great things about themselves as we {say about ourselves}. {I know that} some people want to do this. **13**Those people are not really those whom the Messiah sent to represent him. They deceive people with what they do, and they can only pretend to represent the Messiah. **14**That should not surprise us. The devil also pretends to be a glorious spiritual being. **15**So then, we should expect those who serve him also to pretend to help people become righteous. God will eventually give them what they deserve in proportion to what they have done.

16I repeat what I said earlier: I do not want anyone to think that I am foolish. However, if you do {think that I am foolish}, you should at least allow me to act in foolish ways. That way, I too can say a few great things about myself. **17**What I am about to say is not how I speak when I am representing the Lord {Jesus}. Rather, I am about to speak foolishly as I prove that I can say great things about myself. **18**Many other people say great things about themselves in merely human ways. So, I too will say great things about myself. **19**{I know that you will listen to me,} because you consider yourselves to be wise people, so you are happy to be patient with other people who act foolishly. **20**In fact, you are patient {when people treat you badly}. They may force you to obey them. They may use up what you have. They may cheat you. They may say they are better than you. They may insult you. {However, you are still patient with them.} **21**{If that is the right way for powerful people to treat you, then} I admit {that how we acted when we were with you} shames us and proves that we are weak. On the other hand, whatever other people dare to do, I too can dare to do. Of course, I say these things only because I am acting foolishly. **22**Those people say they are Jews who speak Hebrew, but I also {am a Jew and speak Hebrew}. They say they are Israelites, but I also {am an Israelite}. They say they are descendants of Abraham, but I also {am a descendant of Abraham}. **23**They say they serve the Messiah, but I {serve the Messiah} even more. {Of course,} I am talking like a crazy person. {However,} I have worked harder {than they have}. People have put me in jail more {than them}. People have struck me very many times. I have almost died many times. **24**Five different times Jewish leaders had someone strike me {the maximum number of times:} 39. **25**Three different times leaders had someone repeatedly hit me with a stick. One time people threw stones at me {to kill me}. Three different times the ship {I was sailing in} sank. I have survived for 24 hours in the middle of the ocean. **26**I travel frequently. I go through dangerous places, including rivers, towns, deserts, and oceans. There are always people who could hurt me, including thieves, Jewish people, non-Jewish people, and people who pretend to be fellow believers. **27**I work very hard. I frequently do not sleep much. I do not have enough to eat or drink. I frequently go hungry. I sometimes freeze and do not have enough clothing. **28**Besides everything else {that I could mention}, I anxiously think daily about all the groups of believers. **29**When a fellow believer is feeble, I am feeble. When someone causes a fellow believer to sin, I become very angry.

30Since I need to say great things about myself, I intend to say great things about how feeble I am. **31**We all will forever honor the God and Father of the Lord Jesus. He can testify that what I am saying is true.

32When I was in Damascus city, the local ruler who served King Aretas had soldiers looking for me in the city to capture me. **33**However, fellow believers helped me get away from the local ruler. {They put me} in a large basket, {attached it to a rope, and} let it down through an opening in the city wall.

Chapter 12

1I need to say great things about myself. {So,} although it is not helpful, I am moving on to {speak about} how the Lord {Jesus} specially shows things {to specific people}. **2**Fourteen years ago, God took a certain Christian to the third {level of} heaven. I am not sure whether {God took him there} physically or in a dream or spiritually. Only God

can be sure {how it happened}. **3**Now {I will tell you more about} that specific Christian. {Again,} I am not sure whether {God took him to the third level of heaven} physically or in a dream or spiritually. Only God can be sure {how it happened}. **4**God took that person into Paradise{, the place in heaven where dead believers are}. There, he heard amazing things that he cannot repeat to anyone. **5**I could say great things about that{, since the person I have been talking about is me}. However, I will only say great things about how feeble I am. **6**In fact, suppose that I did want to say great things about myself. Since I am speaking truthfully, I would still not be acting foolishly. However, I decide not to {say great things about myself}. {That way,} people can only characterize me by what they observe me saying and doing. **7**So then, in order that I might not become proud because God revealed such great things to me, he allowed me to suffer. Specifically, a spiritual being whom Satan sent made me suffer. That way, I might not become proud. **8**I asked the Lord {Jesus} three different times to make me stop suffering in that way. **9**He responded by saying to me, “When I act kindly to you, that is all you need. In fact, I make people fully powerful when they are feeble.” Therefore, I will most happily say more great things about how feeble I am. That way, the Messiah will always enable me to act powerfully. **10**So then, I am happy {when bad things happen to me} because {I serve} the Messiah. This includes when I am feeble, when people say bad things about me, when people hurt me, when people persecute me, and when I struggle. {I am happy} because {God} empowers me when I am feeble.

11I have been speaking foolishly, which is what you forced me to do. {You forced me} because you should be saying that I am trustworthy, {but you are not saying that}. {You should be saying that} because I am just as great as any people who say that they represent the Messiah the best. {That is true} even though I am not great at all. **12**I persevered in acting in the ways that prove to you that I really am one whom the Messiah sent to represent him. I did powerful and amazing things. **13**Further, I did not treat you like you were less important than any other group of believers. The only way {I acted differently with you} was that I did not bother you {by asking you for money}. If that was actually wrong, please forgive me for doing it!

14Pay attention! I am about to visit you for the third time. Yet again, I will not bother you {by asking for money}. {That is} because I want you {to trust me and the Messiah}. {I do not want} the things that you have. In fact, since I am like your parent, I should be saving money for you. Further, since you are like my children, you should not be saving money for me. **15**I will most happily do and experience anything to help you. When I love you more {than I did before}, you should not love me less {than you did before}.

16You can agree, then, that I personally did not bother you {by asking for money}. However, perhaps I am a clever person. {Maybe} I somehow tricked you into giving me {money}. **17**{However,} I have not had anyone visit you who has acted for me by cheating you. **18**{For example,} I asked Titus {to visit you}, and I had a fellow believer go with him. {You know that} Titus did not cheat you. He and I live the same way and do the same things.

19You should know that the reason why we have said these things is not to explain to you that I and those who serve with me are trustworthy. Rather, as those whom God has united to the Messiah, we have been saying what pleases God. Of course, {fellow believers} whom we love, we intend everything we say and do to help you grow. **20**{I have said these things} because I am concerned about {what will happen} when I visit. {I am concerned that} I will discover that you are not acting as I want {you to act} and that you will discover that I am not acting as you want {me to act}. {I am concerned} that you may be fighting {with each other}, being jealous {of each other}, being angry {with each other}, trying to control {each other}, saying bad things {about each other}, telling false stories {about others}, saying great things about yourselves, or stirring up crowds {against each other}. **21**{I am concerned} about {what will happen} when I visit you this third time. God may make me ashamed about you. Further, I may feel very sad about many people who have previously done what is wrong and have not stopped having improper sex.

Chapter 13

1{The scripture says:} “At least two or three witnesses must say the same thing {about someone} before we can believe that it is true.” {Be aware that} the next time that I visit you will be the third time {that I will be a witness to what you are doing}. **2**When I visited you the second time, I warned all of you that I was going to punish everyone

among you who had been sinning. And now I am warning you again while I am still away from you. When I visit you this third time, I will punish everyone who has been sinning. **3**I tell you this because you have demanded that I prove to you that the Messiah is speaking to you when I speak to you. {You will know this when he disciplines you.} He will not be weak with you; instead, he will work powerfully among you. **4**You see, {as a man,} the Messiah allowed himself to be weak when people nailed him to a cross. But God is powerful, and he has made him alive again. We, too, are weak human beings, as he was. But God also works powerfully in us to make us live as the Messiah does, so we will work powerfully among you.

5Each of you should ask yourself: "Do I trust the Messiah and live as he directs me?" Each of you should test yourself {in this way}. Then you will know that you truly live as one with Jesus the Messiah. That is true unless, of course, you fail this test. **6**As for us, I am certain that you will understand that we have passed the test. **7**We pray to God that you may not be doing any bad things. We pray for this, not because we want people to consider that we have been successful {in disciplining you}, but so that you would be doing good things. We want this for you even if it means that people consider that we have failed {because you did not need us}. **8**We want you to do good things {even if then we cannot discipline you and appear to be powerful} because we must obey God's true message. We cannot do anything that contradicts God's true message. **9**We are happy when {people think that} we are weak, because you are strong {in obeying God} {without needing discipline from us}. This is the very thing that we pray for, that you may decide to trust and obey God completely. **10**It is because I want you to trust and obey God completely that I am writing to you about these things while I am apart from you. Then when I come to you, I will not have to discipline you severely. The Lord has empowered me to represent him, but he did that so that I could encourage and help you {to trust God more}, not so that I could discourage you {from trusting God}.

11Here are the last things that I want to say to you, my fellow believers. Be joyful! Live in the way that God wants you to live. Let the things that I have said to you encourage you {to trust God more}. Agree with each other {about the important things}. Live peacefully with each other. {If you do these things,} God will be with you. He is the one who enables you to love and to be peaceful with others. **12**Greet each other affectionately in a way that is appropriate for those who are members of God's family. All of God's people {here} send greetings to you. **13**May the Lord Jesus the Messiah act kindly toward you, may God love you, and may the Holy Spirit be with you and join you all together.

Galatians

Chapter 1

1I, Paul, write this letter to you. {I remind you that} God sent me to represent him. That is not because a group of people appointed me, nor because a human being sent me to be an apostle. Instead, I am an apostle because Jesus the Messiah and God the Father have appointed and sent me to be an apostle—yes, God the Father, who made the Messiah alive again after he died! **2**All the fellow believers who are here with me {approve of this message that I am writing}. I am sending this letter to the congregations that are in the province of Galatia. **3**{May} God our Father and our Lord Jesus the Messiah {continue to be} kind to you and {make you} peaceful." **4**The Messiah offered himself as a sacrifice in order that he might remove the guilt for the sinful things we have done. He did that in order that he might enable us to not do the evil things that people who do not know him do. He did this because God, who is our Father, wanted it. **5**{Because that is true,} let us praise God forever and ever. May it be so!

6I am very disappointed that so soon after you trusted in the Messiah you are turning away from God. God chose you to be in a relationship that is based on the kindness of the Messiah. I am also disappointed that so soon you are believing a different message which some say is "good news." **7**Their message is not a true message. What is happening is that certain persons are confusing your minds. They are desiring to change the good news about the Messiah and are creating another message. **8**But even if we apostles or an angel from heaven would tell you a message that is different from the good news that we told you before, I appeal to God that he would punish such a person forever. **9**As we told you previously, so now I tell you this once more: Someone is telling you what he says is good news, but it is a message that is different from the good news that I gave you. So I appeal to God that he eternally condemn that person. **10**I said that because I do not desire that people approve me, contrary to what some people have said about me. It is God whom I desire to approve me. Specifically, I do not say and do things just to please people. If it were still people whom I was trying to please, then I would not be one who willingly and completely serves the Messiah.

11My fellow believers, I want you to know that the message about the Messiah that I proclaim to people is not one that some person created. **12**I was not given this good news by a human being, and no human being taught it to me. Instead, it was God who revealed Jesus the Messiah to me.

13People have told you how I used to behave when I practiced the Jewish religion. They told you that I continually did very harmful things to the groups of believers belonging to God, and they told you that I tried to get rid of those people. **14**I was practicing the Jewish religion more thoroughly than many other Jews who were my age were practicing it. I was also trying much more enthusiastically to get others to obey the traditions that my ancestors kept. **15**Nevertheless, before I was born God selected me for a special task and he kindly chose me. When God thought that it was good, **16**he showed me who his Son really is. He did this so that I would tell others the good news about his Son in regions where the non-Jews live. But I did not immediately go to any human beings in order to gain an understanding of that message. **17**I also did not immediately leave Damascus and go to Jerusalem {for that purpose} to those who were representatives of Jesus before I was. Rather, I went away into the region of Arabia{, a desert area}. Later I returned once more to the city of Damascus. **18**Then three years after {God revealed this good news to me,} I went up to the city of Jerusalem in order that I might meet Peter. {But} I remained with him for {only} fifteen days. **19**I also saw James, the brother and representative of our Lord Jesus, but I did not see any other representatives of Jesus. **20**God knows that what I am writing to you is completely true! **21**After I left Jerusalem, I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. **22**At that time people in the Christian congregations who were in the province of Judea still had not met me personally **23**They only heard others say about me repeatedly, "Paul, the one who in the past was doing harmful things to us, is now telling the same message which we believe

and which formerly he was trying to cause people to stop believing!" **24**So they kept praising God because he had caused me to believe in Jesus and because I was now telling people the good news about him.

Chapter 2

1After fourteen years passed, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas. I also took Titus. **2**I went up there because of what God revealed to me. {It was not because someone asked me to come.} I told people the content of the good news that I preach to non-Jews. But I spoke privately to those whom your new teachers highly respect so that what I was doing and what I had done might not become useless. That could have happened if people rejected my message because they thought that I was teaching falsely, which could have happened if the leaders in Jerusalem would have disagreed with my message}. **3**But those leaders did not even require Titus, who was with me and was an uncircumcised Gentile, to be circumcised. **4**But this problem occurred because {some people demanded that Titus be circumcised} after they had successfully pretended that they were fellow believers and associated with the true believers. They associated with the true believers in order that they might observe closely what we do because we are free from having to obey all the Jewish laws and rituals because of our close relationship with the Messiah Jesus. Those people wanted to make us like slaves of those rituals {by convincing us that we cannot trust the Messiah solely but that we must also obey all the Jewish laws and rituals}. **5**But not even briefly did we do what they wanted regarding circumcision. We resisted them in order that you might continue to have, and benefit from, the true, correct, and unmodified good news. **6**The leaders in Jerusalem, whom your new teachers respect, did not add anything to what I proclaim. And I would add that what status those leaders had did not influence me, because God does not favor important and powerful persons more than others. **7**Instead {of those leaders adding to the content of the message that I tell people,} they understood that God had given me the good news so that I might proclaim it to the non-Jews, just like God had given the good news to Peter so that he might tell it to those who are Jews. **8**That is, just like God had authorized and empowered Peter in order that he might be a representative of Jesus to take God's message to the Jews, he also had authorized and empowered me in order that I might be a representative of Jesus to take God's message to the non-Jews. **9**Those leaders knew that God had kindly given to me this special mission. So James, Peter, and John, the ones whom your new teachers respect because they are leaders of the believers, shook hands with us to show that they agreed that Barnabas and I are serving the Lord just like they are, and that we are preaching the same message that they are preaching. They also agreed that we are the ones whom God was sending to tell his message to non-Jews, but that God is sending them to tell his message to Jews. **10**They only urged us to still remember to help the poor among the fellow believers who live in Jerusalem. That is exactly what I have been eager to do.

11But later, Peter became guilty of doing wrong things. This happened while he was visiting us in the city of Antioch. So I confronted him directly about those things. **12**This is what happened: Peter had been eating with the non-Jewish believers there. But then some men came who were from {the group of Jewish believers in Jerusalem that} James {was leading}. These men said that believers should keep the Jewish laws. Peter was afraid of what people who want Jewish believers to keep the Jewish laws might do, and so he began to withdraw from the non-Jews and eat with only the Jewish believers. **13**Also, the other Jewish believers who were in Antioch acted in a way that they knew was not right, along with Peter{, when they separated themselves from the non-Jewish believers}. The result was that {they convinced} even Barnabas to stop associating with the non-Jewish believers! **14**I had realized that they were not acting forthrightly and in a manner that was consistent with the correct facts and teachings of the good news about the Messiah. {So when all the fellow believers had come together,} I told Peter {the following:} "Although you are a Jew, you often conduct yourself like non-Jews do by disregarding Jewish laws about food. When you are among non-Jews, you do not customarily conduct yourself at all like Jews do. So, now it is wrong that you are causing non-Jews to think that they must obey all the Jewish rituals and customs! **15**We were born as Jews. {We were} not {born} as non-Jews. We Jews have always considered non-Jews to be sinners because they do not obey the Jewish rituals and laws. **16**But we Jewish believers now know that it is not because some person obeys those things {that God commanded} in the laws {he gave the Jews} that God makes a person righteous. {God makes a person righteous} only if that person trusts in the Messiah Jesus. So even we Jews have trusted the Messiah Jesus. {We did that} so God would declare us good in his sight, because we trust the Messiah, and not because we try to obey the laws that God gave to Moses. We did that because God has said that he will not

declare anyone good in his sight just because they obey those laws. **17**Furthermore, because we {Jewish believers} desired that God would make us righteous because of our relationship with the Messiah, it means that we ourselves, like non-Jews {whom we called sinners,} also disobeyed the laws and rituals that God gave Moses. But we certainly cannot conclude that it is the Messiah who causes us to sin. No, the Messiah certainly does not cause anyone to sin.

18If I again believed that God would make me righteous because of my obeying the laws that he gave to Moses, I would be like a man who rebuilds an old building that he had torn down. If I did that I would show that I was guilty of acting wrongly. **19**I realized that God would not regard me as righteous because I tried to obey the laws that he gave to Moses. So I have decided not to respond to what those laws demand, just like a dead person does not respond to anything. {I decided to do this} so that I may now live to serve God. It is as though I was with the Messiah when he died on the cross. **20**My old way of living ended since I began believing in the Messiah. No longer am I directing the way I behave as I did before {I believed in the Messiah}. Now the Messiah is directing how I behave. And whatever I do now while I live in my earthly body, I do it by trusting in God's Son. He is the one who loved me and offered himself as a sacrifice for me. **21**I am not rejecting as useless what God kindly did for me{, as my opponents are doing}. If God considers people to be righteous because they obey the laws that he gave to Moses, then the Messiah died needlessly!"

Chapter 3

1You {fellow believers} who live in Galatia are acting mindlessly! Someone must have put an evil spell on you! I clearly explained to you what Jesus the Messiah accomplished when he died on the cross. **2**{So,} I want to tell you this one thing: God did not give you his Holy Spirit because you obeyed the laws that he gave Moses. Surely you must know that the reason he gave you his Holy Spirit is because when you heard the good news about the Messiah you believed it. **3**You are acting very foolishly! You first became Christians because God's Spirit enabled you. So, you should not now think that it is because of what you do by obeying the laws God gave Moses that you will continue to grow spiritually. **4**{Keep in mind that if} what God has done for you {was because of your obeying the laws that God gave to Moses and not because of trusting in the Messiah then} you suffered many things needlessly! I certainly hope that you did not suffer like that needlessly. **5**So then, when God now generously gives to you his Spirit and performs mighty deeds among you, it is not because you obey the laws that God gave to Moses? Surely you know it is because when you heard the good news about the Messiah you believed it!

6{What you have experienced is} just as {Moses had written in the scriptures about Abraham. He wrote that} Abraham trusted God, and {as a result,} God considered Abraham as being righteous. **7**You must realize, therefore, that it is those who trust in what the Messiah has done who are like Abraham's descendants {because they trust in God as Abraham did}. **8**Furthermore, God planned beforehand that it was when non-Jews trusted him that he would consider them righteous. Moses wrote in the Scriptures this good message that God told Abraham: "Through you, I will bless people in all nations." **9**So, we can conclude that it is those who trust in what the Messiah has done whom God blesses along with Abraham, the one who trusted him {long ago}. **10**That is, God will eternally punish all those who mistakenly think that God will consider them righteous as a result of their trying to obey the laws that God gave to Moses. What Moses wrote in the Scriptures is that God will eternally punish everyone who does not continuously and completely obey all the laws that God instructed him to write in the Book of the Law. **11**God does not regard any person as righteous as a result of their trying to obey the laws that he gave to Moses. This is evident since {the Scriptures say}, "Every righteous person lives {spiritually} as a result of their trusting {God}." **12**But when God gave his laws to the Jews, he did not make them dependent upon a person believing in him. Instead {God said that} it is those who obey {all} God's laws, continuously and completely, who will live through obeying them.

13Even though we humans have not continuously and completely obeyed God's laws, the Messiah rescued us from God punishing us eternally. The Messiah rescued us by his being the one God condemned instead of God condemning us. What Moses wrote in the Scriptures shows that this is true. He wrote, "God has cursed anyone whom people have executed {for his crimes} by hanging his body on a tree." **14**{The Messiah rescued us} in order

that as a result of what he has done, God might bless the non-Jews, in a way similar to the way God blessed Abraham. The reason for this is that as a result of our trusting in the Messiah, we all might receive the Holy Spirit whom God promised to give to us.

15My fellow believers, I will now illustrate by referring to human relationships. After two people have signed an agreement, no one can reject it or add to it. **16**God declared to Abraham and his descendant that he was promising to give blessings to Abraham. The words that God spoke were not “and your descendants.” He was not referring to many persons. Instead, he was referring to one person, who is the Messiah, because the words that God spoke were, “and your descendant.” **17**This is what I am saying: God established an agreement with Abraham that the laws which he gave to the Jews 430 years later could not cancel. **18**I want you to know that if it is because we obey the laws God gave to the Jews that he gives to us what he has promised to give to us, then he would not be giving it because he had promised to do so. However, God kindly gave to Abraham what he had promised to give to him, just because God had promised that he would give it to him. {Similarly,} it is not because we obey God’s laws that God kindly gives to us what he has promised to give to us.

19So, if someone should ask, “Why did God later give his laws to Moses?” I would reply that it was in order that people might realize how sinful they were. Those laws were valid until Jesus came. He was the descendant that God was referring to when he made the promises to Abraham. God gave his laws to Moses by God’s causing angels to speak to him. Moses was the mediator, the one who told the laws to the people. **20**Now, when a mediator functions, one person is not speaking with another directly; but God himself made his promises directly to Abraham.

21If someone should ask, “When God gave his laws to Moses long after he told Abraham what he was promising to give to him, was he changing his mind?” {I would reply that} God certainly did not change his mind when he did that! If God had given a law that could enable people to live {eternally and spiritually}, then it certainly would be because of people obeying that law that God would consider people righteous. **22**But, {in fact, it is impossible for the law to enable people to live eternally or spiritually.} Instead, the law given in the Scriptures caused all people to be unable to escape being punished for their sins, just like people in prison are unable to escape. {God did that} in order that he might give what he promised to those who trust Jesus Christ, just because they trust him. **23**Before God revealed the good news about trusting in the Messiah, the laws that God gave to Moses were confining us, as a prisoner in jail is confined. This happened until the time we might believe the good news concerning the Messiah, the good news that God was about to reveal {and now has}. **24**Like a father supervises his immature child by appointing a servant to take care of that child, God was supervising us by his laws until the Messiah {came}. {He did this} in order that he might now declare us righteous in his sight {only} because we trust in the Messiah. **25**But now that God has revealed the message about trusting in the Messiah, the laws that God gave to Moses no longer supervise us.

26Now all of you {Jews and non-Jews} are {as though you are} God’s children because you trust in the Messiah Jesus. You are {now} in close spiritual union with the Messiah Jesus {because you believe in Him}. **27**That is, you who {began a relationship with the Messiah when you} were baptized identified yourselves with Christ. **28**If you believe in the Messiah, it does not matter to God if you are Jews or non-Jews; slaves or ones who are not slaves; males or females, because all of you are as one sort of person because of your relationship with the Messiah Jesus. **29**Furthermore, since you belong to the Messiah, you are {like} Abraham’s descendants because you trust God as Abraham did, and you will possess what God promised Abraham.

Chapter 4

1Now, I will further discuss children and heirs. An heir is a person who will later possess and control all that his father has. But as long as that heir is a child, others control him, with the result that he is just like a slave. **2**Until the day that his father has {previously} determined, other persons supervise the child and manage his property. **3**Likewise, when we were spiritually immature {because we did not yet believe in the Messiah}, we submitted to the rules that everyone in this world lives by. Those rules controlled us like masters control their slaves. **4**But exactly at the time that God had previously determined, he sent Jesus his Son, into the world. {Jesus was} born to a human

mother, and he had to obey the laws that God gave to Moses. **5**God sent Jesus to rescue us who had to obey God's laws he gave to Moses from being condemned for not obeying these laws. God did this so that we might all receive from him the status of being his children. **6**Furthermore, God sent the Spirit to live in our inner beings because we are now in such a close relationship with God it is as though we are his children. It is his Spirit who enables us to fervently call out {to God}, "Father, Father!" **7**So, because of what God has done, no longer is each of you like a slave. Instead, each of you is like a child of God. Furthermore, since each of you is now like God's child, God has also made each of you his heir, one to whom he will give all that he has promised.

8When you did not have a relationship with God, you served gods that really did not exist. You were like slaves at that time, because you were in spiritual bondage. **9**But now you have come to intimately know God. Perhaps it would be better to say that now God intimately knows each of you. So now you are acting foolishly! You are again believing that by obeying rules and rites you will benefit spiritually! Those rules are ineffective and inadequate! You are wanting to obey them again like slaves obey their masters. **10**You non-Jews are carefully practicing Jewish rules and rituals regarding what you should do on Jewish special days and at special times in certain months, seasons, and years. **11**I am concerned about your mistaken ideas! I do not want to have so strenuously served you in vain. **12**My fellow believers, I strongly urge you that you do as I do. {Stop thinking that you have to obey the Jewish rules and ceremonial laws prescribed by the law of Moses.} When I was with you, I did not obey all the Jewish rules and ceremonial laws, just like you did not obey them. At that time you treated me entirely as you should have.

13You remember that I originally told you the good news because I was physically weak {and was recovering}. Because of the opportunity which that sickness provided I was able to tell you the good news. **14**Although you might have treated me contemptuously because of my physical malady, you did not treat me contemptuously or reject me. Instead, you welcomed me like you would welcome an angel that came from God. You welcomed me like you would welcome the Messiah Jesus himself! **15**I am disappointed that you have forgotten that then you declared that you were pleased with me. I know for certain that you would have done anything to help me. **16**So I am very disappointed that you now act as though I have become hostile to you because I have kept speaking the true message about the Messiah to you. **17**Those who are insisting on obeying the Jewish laws are eagerly showing interest in you, but they are not doing this because they have good motives. They are doing this because they want you not to associate with me and others who teach what is true about the Messiah. They desire that instead of you associating with us, you will eagerly show interest in them, not in us. **18**But, it is an honorable thing to eagerly desire to do the right things at all times. I would like you to eagerly desire to do the right things, both when I am with you and when I am absent. **19**You who are like my children, once again I am very concerned about you, and I will continue to be concerned about you until you become like the Messiah in your thinking and in your conduct. **20**But I do wish that I could be with you now and that I might talk more gently with you, because right now I do not know what to do about you.

21Some of you desire to obey all the laws that God gave Moses. I say that you should consider the implications of what Moses wrote in the Scriptures. **22**He wrote that Abraham became the father of two sons. His female slave, Hagar, bore one son, and his wife Sarah, who was not a slave, bore the other. **23**Also, the sons differed. Ishmael, the son born by Hagar, the female slave, was conceived naturally. But Isaac, the son born by Sarah, his wife who was not a slave, was conceived miraculously because God intervened in order to fulfill what he had promised Abraham. **24**I am telling you this as an illustration. These two women symbolize two agreements. God made the first agreement, which involved obeying the laws that God gave to Moses at Mount Sinai. Because that agreement forces those who accept it to keep obeying all its rules, it is like a slave mother who gives birth to slaves. So Hagar, the female slave, symbolizes this agreement. **25**Also Hagar symbolizes the agreement, with its laws and rituals, that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai, in the land of Arabia. Hagar also symbolizes the Jewish religion. The Jewish religion is like a slave mother, and those who practice the Jewish religion are like slave children because they all must obey the laws that God gave to Moses. **26**But there is a heavenly Jerusalem, and because we belong to the heavenly Jerusalem, it is like a mother to all of us {who believe in the Messiah}. Those who belong to the heavenly Jerusalem are free from having to obey the laws of Moses and free from being condemned for failing to obey those laws. **27**Our new city will have more people than those who live in Jerusalem now. It will be just like Isaiah foretold {about the people whom he expected would come back to Jerusalem from exile}. {He expected that they would be more numerous than those who were taken into exile.} He wrote: You who live in Jerusalem, you will rejoice! Now

you have no children, like a barren woman who does not give birth to children! But some day you will shout joyfully, as loudly as you can, even though now you are few in number, like a woman who cannot give birth to children, and you feel deserted. You will be very happy because you will have many children who will come to you. Those children will be more than the children any woman with a husband could have borne. **28**Now, my fellow believers, you have become children of God because God has fulfilled what he promised to Abraham. You are like Isaac{, who was born because God fulfilled what he promised to give Abraham}. **29**Also, long ago Abraham's son Ishmael, the one who was conceived naturally, caused trouble for Abraham's son Isaac, who was conceived supernaturally. Similarly, now those who think that we must obey the laws that God gave to Moses in order that God will save us are causing trouble for those who are trusting Abraham's descendant, the Messiah. **30**But Moses wrote these words in a scripture passage in Genesis: "The son of the woman who was not a slave will inherit what his father owns. The female slave's son will certainly not inherit those things. So send away from this place the female slave and her son!" **31**My fellow believers, Hagar symbolizes the laws that God gave to Moses. But we are not those who must obey all the laws that God gave to Moses. So we are not the female slave Hagar's spiritual descendants. But Sarah's descendants are those who were born as a result of God fulfilling what he promised to Abraham. So we are the spiritual descendants of Sarah, the woman who was not a slave.

Chapter 5

1The Messiah freed us {believers} {from having to obey the laws God gave the Jews} in order that we would not have to obey {them}. So continue to be steadfastly committed {to the Lord}. Do not let anyone force you to obey {those laws} again as if you were slaves {to those laws}. **2**I am Paul. Pay attention to what I am telling you! If you let anyone circumcise you, what the Messiah has done for you will not help you at all! **3**Once again I solemnly declare to every man who has someone circumcise him, that he must obey all of the laws {God gave the Jews} {in order to be righteous}. **4**You who are trying to make yourselves righteous by {obeying} the laws {God gave the Jews} have separated yourselves from the Messiah. God will no longer act kindly toward you. **5**{This is so} because we {believers} are confidently expecting by trusting {in Jesus} that God will make us righteous. The Holy Spirit enables us {to do this}. **6**{This is so} because {when} God has united {us} with the Messiah Jesus, whether people are circumcised or not is not important. Rather, only whether we trust {in the Messiah} is important. We show we trust {in the Messiah} by loving others.

7You were spiritually progressing so well! You should never have let someone stop you {from progressing}, so that what is true does not convince you! **8**God is the one who calls you. He is not the one who is persuading you {to think like this}! **9**{This false teaching might deceive all of you, just like} a little yeast {in some dough} makes all of it swell up. **10**Because God has united {us} with the Lord {Jesus}, I am certain that you will believe only {what I have told you}. By contrast, God will certainly punish everyone who is confusing you {about these things}, whoever they are. **11**Fellow believers, as for me, were I to still declare that men must have someone circumcise them {in order to be righteous}, surely no one would still be persecuting me! {This is because} declaring that would abolish how offensive {Jesus dying on} the cross is. **12**O that those who are upsetting you would just castrate themselves!

13Fellow believers, God has called you to free you {from having to obey the laws God gave the Jews}. But he did not free you {from those laws} so you could sin. Instead {of sinning}, serve each other by loving {each other}! **14**{Do this} because one command summarizes all the laws {God gave the Jews}. That {command} is, "Love each person as much as {you love} yourself." **15**Now if you keep attacking and harming each other {like wild animals}, beware that you might completely destroy each other.

16I am telling you to let the Holy Spirit lead you. {If you do that,} you will definitely not do what your {sinful} selves want to do. **17**{This is} because your sinful selves {want to do what} is contrary to what the Holy Spirit {wants to do}. Also, {what} the Holy Spirit {wants to do is contrary to what} your sinful selves {want to do}. {This is} because they are always against each other. The result is that you do not {always} do the {good} things that you {truly} want to do. **18**However, if the Holy Spirit leads you, the laws {God gave the Jews} do not control you.

19You clearly know what people do because of their sinful selves. {They} do sexually immoral acts, impure acts, {and} unrestrained immoral acts. **20**{They also} worship false gods, do witchcraft, repeatedly act in hostile ways, quarrel with people, act jealously, behave angrily, act ambitiously, act divisively within a group of people, and make divisive groups of people. **21**{They also} envy others, get drunk, celebrate drunkenly, and do other {sinful} things like these. I warn you now about {doing these sinful things}, just like I warned you previously: anyone who regularly does these {sinful} things will not participate in God's kingdom. **22**Yet the Holy Spirit enables {us believers in the Messiah} to love others and be joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, **23**gentle, and to control ourselves. There is no law that prohibits people from doing these {good} things. **24**We who belong to the Messiah Jesus have stopped doing {what} our sinful selves feel and want {to do}.

25Since the Holy Spirit has made us spiritually alive, we must let the Holy Spirit lead us. **26**Do not boast. Do not make each other angry. Do not envy each other.

Chapter 6

1Fellow believers, if you discover that another believer does something wrong, those of you who are spiritually mature should gently correct that person. {While doing so,} you should be very careful so that you do not sin as well. **2**Help each other overcome the problems you have. By doing that, you will obey what the Messiah commands. **3**{I say this} because people who wrongly think that they are better than others trick themselves {into believing what is not true}. **4**Instead, each of you should constantly evaluate what you do. {Only} then might you be able to rightly boast about {what} you {have done} on your own instead {of wrongly boasting} about {what} someone else {has done}. **5**{I say this} because each one {of you} must do what God has given you {to do}.

6If fellow believers teach you what God has said, then you must share what you have with them. **7**Do not trick yourselves: No one can scorn God! {This is} because{, just like} a farmer will harvest exactly the kind of crop that he plants{, people will experience the results of what they have done}. **8**Those who do what their {sinful} selves want to do will experience the result {of doing so}. God will punish them forever. But those who please the Holy Spirit will experience the result {of doing so}. The Holy Spirit will enable them to live forever {with God}. **9**Let us not tire of doing what is good, because at the right time we will experience the {good} result {of what we do}. {This will happen} if we do not stop {doing these good things}. **10**Therefore, let us do what is good to everyone whenever we can. {Let us} especially {do what is good} to all our fellow believers {in Jesus}.

11I am writing {this} to you in my own handwriting. Notice how large the letters are! **12**Everyone who wants to impress {the Jews} with how they appear outwardly is trying to force you to have someone circumcise you. {They} only {do this} in order to prevent the Jews from persecuting them for {believing that} the Messiah Jesus died on the cross {to save us}. **13**{I say this} because not even those people whom someone has circumcised obey the laws {God gave the Jews}. Rather, they want to circumcise you in order to boast because of how you appear outwardly. **14**As for me, I will ever only boast about our Lord Jesus the Messiah dying on the cross {to save us}! Because Jesus died on the cross, the {sinful} world has become {like} a dead person to me, and I have become {like} a dead person to the {sinful} world. **15**{I may boast about Jesus dying on the cross} because whether people are circumcised or not is not important. Rather, {the Holy Spirit} making them new people is important. **16**I pray that God will make peaceful everyone who behaves in this way and will act kindly to them. {I} also {pray these things} for those Israelites who {trust in Jesus and} belong to God!

17I have scars on my body because I declared the truth about Jesus. So do not let anyone bother me {about these matters} again!

18Fellow believers, {I pray that} our Lord Jesus the Messiah {will} be gracious to all of you! May it be so!

Ephesians

Chapter 1

1I am Paul. The Messiah Jesus sent me to represent him because that is what God wanted. I write this letter to the people whom God has set apart for himself who are living [in the city of Ephesus][1] and who are loyal to the Messiah Jesus. **2**{May} God our Father and our Lord Jesus the Messiah {continue to be} kind to you and {make you} peaceful.

3Praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah! He has blessed us with every kind of spiritual blessing that comes from heaven because we belong to the Messiah. **4**In fact, even before God created the world, he chose us to belong to the Messiah, so that the Messiah could make us completely holy for him. Because God loves us, **5**he decided long ago to adopt us as his own children by means of Jesus the Messiah. It pleased him to do this, so he did what he wanted to do. **6**Because of this, we now praise God for being so amazingly kind to us, far beyond what we could deserve, as he blessed us by means of his Son whom he loves.

7When Jesus died in our place, he paid the price for our sin. That is, when he died for us, God forgave us our sins because that is how abundantly and generously kind he is. **8**God knew that we would need him to be extremely kind to us in this way because God knows everything and is completely wise. **9**In this way, God has now revealed to us his plan that he had not revealed to anyone before—a plan that he was pleased to accomplish through the work of the Messiah. **10**In this plan, when the time was just right, the Messiah would unite all things under himself so that all things in heaven and all things on earth would belong to the Messiah. **11**Because of what the Messiah has done, God has also claimed us as his own. He planned to do this long ago, and he always does exactly what he wishes to do. **12**In God's plan, we Jews, who were the first to trust in the Messiah, would live to praise God because he is so great. **13**Then you non-Jews also heard the true message, the good news of how God saves you, and you believed in the Messiah. When you did that, God marked you as belonging to the Messiah by giving you the Holy Spirit, as he had promised to do. **14**The Holy Spirit is like a down payment that proves that God will also give to us everything else that he has promised to give to us at that time when he will release everything that he has for us. Praise God because he is so great!

15Because God has done all of this for you, and because people have told me how you trust in the Lord Jesus and how much you love all the believers, **16**I thank God for you constantly as I talk to God about you when I pray to him. **17**I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, the glorious Father, will give you his Spirit to make you wise and to reveal God to you so that you can continually know him better. **18**I pray that God may enable you to see things as they truly are so that you may know the wonderful plan that God has for us because he has called us to be his people. I pray that you may know how wonderful and abundant are the things he promises to give to us and to all the believers. **19**And I pray that you will know how exceedingly powerfully God acts for us who believe in the Messiah. He is just as powerfully strong for us **20**as he was for the Messiah when he caused the Messiah to become alive again after he died, and raised him to the place of highest honor in heaven. **21**The Messiah rules as supreme there over every ruler and powerful spirit on every level of authority and over every being that people revere. He rules over them not only now, but forever. **22**God has made everything to be subject to the Messiah and has appointed the Messiah as the ruler over everything among all believers everywhere. **23**We believers relate to the Messiah as the parts of a person's body relate to its head. He supplies what is lacking for all believers just as he completes everything everywhere.

1:1 [1]

Chapter 2

1Before you trusted the Messiah, you were spiritually dead—you were unable to stop sinning. **2**You used to live in a sinful way, guided by the spirit of this world. You were guided by the ruler of the evil spirits, who controls the authorities of this world. This ruler is Satan, who now works through the people who disobey God. **3**All of us used to live in the same way as these people who disobey God; we did the evil things that we desired, things that would bring pleasure to our bodies and our minds. We deserved that God should be very angry with us, just as he is with the other people.

4But God is very merciful to us because he loves us very much. **5**God loved us so much that even when we were spiritually dead and constantly sinning, he made us alive by joining us to the Messiah. Remember, when God saved you from being spiritually dead, he was being very kind to you in a way that you did not deserve. **6**God saved us from being spiritually dead just as he raised Jesus from being physically dead and he made us spiritually alive with him. Then he gave us seats of honor to rule with the Messiah Jesus in heaven. **7**He did that to show to everyone in all future times how exceedingly gracious he is in being kind to us by joining us to the Messiah Jesus.

8So God was very kind to you in a way that you did not deserve when he saved you from being spiritually dead. He did this because you trust in Jesus. You have not saved yourselves; this is a gift from God— **9**a gift that no one can earn, so no one can boast and say that he has saved himself. **10**So God is making us what he wants us to be; through the Messiah Jesus he has created us as new people to do good things—things that God had previously arranged for us to do.

11So remember that previously you non-Jewish people according to who your ancestors were did not belong to God's people. The Jews insulted you by calling you "the uncircumcised." They call themselves "the circumcised." By this they mean that they, not you, are God's people, although circumcision is something that humans do that only changes the body, not something that God does that changes the spirit. **12**Remember that, at that time, you were separated from the Messiah. You were foreigners to the people of Israel. You did not share in the things that God promised in his agreements with them. You did not confidently expect that God would save you. No, you were living in this world completely without God. **13**But now, because you have trusted in Jesus the Messiah, God has brought you into his family, even though before that you did not know him. This was possible because the Messiah died on the cross for you.

14It is the Messiah who has made it possible for Jews and non-Jews to live peacefully with each other. He made the two separate groups into one group. The two groups hated each other, but he took away every reason for hating each other when he died for all of us. **15**He made it no longer necessary for us to obey the commandments and requirements of the Jewish law for him to accept us. He did this in order to make the Jews and the non-Jews into one new people who would live peacefully together because of their relationship to him. **16**He did this in order to reconcile both groups to God as one group by dying on the cross for all of them. By dying for them, Jesus made it possible for them to stop being enemies to each other and to God. **17**Jesus came and announced the good news that we can be at peace with God; he announced this to you non-Jews, who did not know about God, and to us Jews, who did know about God. **18**Because of what Jesus did for us, both Jews and non-Jews now can come to God the Father with the help of God's Spirit.

19Therefore now you non-Jews are no longer left out of God's people, but instead you are fellow members with those whom God has set apart for himself, and you belong to God's family. **20**You are like stones that God has put together into a building, and the apostles and prophets are like the foundation stones of that building. You depend on what they have taught, just as building stones depend on the foundation stones below them to form a wall that is upright and strong. The Messiah Jesus himself is like the cornerstone, which is the most important stone of the building. **21**Jesus determines where each person belongs, just as the cornerstone determines where each stone fits in the building. Just as a builder joins stones together to make a holy temple, Jesus is assembling his family of believers to be one holy group which serves the Lord. **22**Because you belong to Jesus, he is building you up together, both Jews and non-Jews, into one family that is like a building in which God lives by means of his Spirit.

Chapter 3

1Because God is working out this plan for you non-Jews, I, Paul, pray to the Father for you, even as I am in prison because I serve the Messiah Jesus for your sake. **2**I assume that people have told you about me, that God has given me the task of communicating to you non-Jews his plan to be extremely kind to you. **3**God told me this message that people did not understand before by revealing it to me directly, just as I wrote to you before briefly. **4**As you read that, you can perceive that I clearly understand things that God had not previously revealed about the Messiah. **5**Formerly, God did not fully reveal this message to people, but now his Spirit has revealed it to his holy apostles and prophets. **6**The message is this: the non-Jews now share together with Jews the spiritual riches of God and belong to the same group of God's people and will share all the things God has promised to his people because they are joined to the Messiah Jesus as a result of believing the good news. **7**I now serve God by telling people this good news. God was very kind to me and gave me this work to do even though I am not worthy of it, and he enables me to do it by powerfully working in me.

8Although I am the least worthy of all of God's people, God kindly gave me this gift: he appointed me to proclaim to the non-Jews the good news about the unending spiritual blessings that the Messiah has for us **9**and to enable everyone to understand what God's plan is. This plan is something that God, who created everything, has kept hidden from long ago. **10**God hid this plan so that as he reveals it now by making it happen in those who believe, he also reveals to the spiritual authorities at the highest levels how profoundly wise he is. **11**This is the plan that God has always had, and it is what he accomplished through the work of the Messiah Jesus, our Lord. **12**So now, because of what Jesus has done, we can come to God freely and confidently because, when we trust in Jesus, he joins us to himself. **13**So please do not be discouraged by the things that I am suffering here in prison on your behalf, because they produce a glorious result for you.

14Because God has done all this for you, I kneel and pray to God our Father. **15**He is the original father, who gave the pattern for every family in heaven and on the earth to follow. **16**I pray that God will give you his Spirit to strengthen your spirit in proportion to how abundantly great he is. **17**I pray that the Messiah may stay as close to you as your own hearts because you trust in him, and that everything that you do and say will be a result of God's love for you and your love for him and others **18**so that you may be fully able to understand, along with all of God's people, how very much the Messiah loves us. **19**I pray that you will come to know how much the Messiah loves us, even though he loves us so much that we cannot understand it. I pray that God will give you a full measure of everything that he is.

20Praise God, who is able to do much more than anything that we ask him to do, or even that we think that he can do, because of how powerfully he works within us! **21**May all believers praise him for how great he is and for the awesome work that he has done through the Messiah Jesus! May they praise him throughout all generations forever! May it be so.

Chapter 4

1Because of all this, as someone who is in prison because I serve the Lord Jesus, I appeal to you to live in a way that honors Jesus, who called you to live for him. **2**Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, enduring the bothersome things that others do because you love each other. **3**Since God's Spirit has united you, do everything that you can to remain united with one another. Bind yourselves together by acting peacefully toward each other. **4**God only has one family of believers and one Holy Spirit, just as he also called all of you to receive the one and only thing that people can hope for, that belongs to you whom God has called. **5**There is only one Lord, Jesus the Messiah, only one way to believe in him, and they baptized us to show that we belong to him alone. **6**There is one God, who is the Father of all of us, whether Jew or non-Jew. He rules over all of us, works through all of us, and is in all of us.

7To each one of us God has given spiritual gifts in just the way that the Messiah has decided that we should have them. **8**That is why the scripture says,

As he went up to the high place,

he brought with him many people whom he had captured,

and gave gifts to his people.

9The words “he went up” certainly make us know that the Messiah had also previously gone down to the lower parts of the earth. **10**The Messiah, who came down to earth from heaven, is also the one who returned upward to the most exalted position in heaven in order that he might fill the universe. **11**As gifts to his people, he appointed some of them to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to seek out people to tell them the good news about Jesus, and some to care for and to teach the groups of believers. **12**God appointed all of them to prepare God’s people to do the work of serving others so that all the people who belong to the Messiah might become spiritually strong. **13**This work will continue until all of us together become what God wants us to be: united as we together fully trust in the Son of God and experience his working in us, and completely mature as a group of believers—as fully mature in trusting and knowing God as the Messiah himself. **14**Then we will no longer be spiritually immature, as little children are immature. We will no longer follow every new teaching, always changing what we believe like a boat that goes one way and then the other as the wind and waves change direction. We will not allow clever people who teach what is false to deceive us with their lies. **15**Rather than that, as we lovingly speak to each other what is true, let us become more and more like the Messiah in every way as he directs us, just like a person’s head directs the person’s body. **16**He is the one who joins us all together and keeps us connected to each other. He teaches us how to support each other and to work in a coordinated way as he gives the ability that is appropriate to each one of us, just as a person’s head does that for the parts of his body. In this way, as we love each other, we will grow together and make each other stronger.

17For that reason, and with the authority of the Lord Jesus, I tell you this: from now on you must not live in the same way as the other non-Jews live. The way that they live comes from an empty way of thinking. **18**They are unable to think clearly about what is right or wrong because they try to live completely separated from God. They do this because they do not know what they are missing and because they stubbornly refuse to obey God. **19**They have become unable to sense if something is good or bad, and so they have devoted themselves to doing whatever shameful things their bodies desire. They commit all kinds of immoral acts and want to do them more and more.

20But that is not how you learned to live when you learned about the Messiah, **21**to the extent that you have heard and understood the message about Jesus and have learned from him, since his way is the true way to live. **22**Your teachers taught you to stop living the way that you used to live. Because you desired to do evil things, you deceived yourselves into thinking that those things were good. Living like that was destroying you spiritually. **23**So you must let God give you a new spirit and a new way of thinking, **24**and you must start living like the new person that God created you in his own image to be. He created you to live in the right way with each other and with himself, in the true way of Jesus.

25So stop lying to one another. Speak truthfully to each other because we belong to each other as members of God’s family. **26**Be angry about sinful behavior, but do not sin because you are angry. Before the end of each day, take care of whatever has made you angry **27**so that you will not allow the devil to do evil things among you. **28**Those who have been stealing must not steal anymore. Instead, they must work hard, doing good work by their own efforts so that they may have something to give to those who are needy. **29**Do not say harmful things. Instead, say good things that will encourage people when they need help so that God can work through your words to benefit those who hear. **30**God has marked you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, who will be with you until the day that the Messiah will rescue you from this world. So do not make the Holy Spirit of God sad by how you live. **31**Do your best to completely stop behaving in these ways: Do not be resentful or furious toward others or even become angry with others. Do not shout abusively at others or slander others. Never act maliciously in any way.

32Rather than behave like that, be kind to one another. Act mercifully toward each other. Forgive each other in the same way that God also forgave you through what the Messiah has done for you.

Chapter 5

1Because of what God has done for you, imitate him just as children imitate the father who loves them dearly. **2**Do everything in a way that shows that you love others. Be like the Messiah, who loved us so much that he willingly died for us on the cross as the offering and sacrifice to God in our place. This sacrifice pleased God very much. **3**But there should be no reason for anyone to even suggest that any of you are involved in sexual sin or any kind of immoral or obsessive sexual behavior. Such sins do not belong among God's people. **4**When you speak to each other, do not tell obscene stories or say foolish things or joke about committing sins. Such things are not what people who belong to God talk about. Instead, express the things that you are thankful for. **5**It is quite true that these people will be excluded from the kingdom of the Messiah who is God: everyone who is sexually immoral or indecent, or who is obsessed with sex, which is the same as worshiping an idol. **6**Do not let anyone deceive you by telling you that God will not punish people who do these things. It is because of these very things that God will punish the people who disobey him.

7So do not join with those people in doing these kinds of sins. **8**Remember that before you believed in the Lord Jesus, you did not know what was true, just as people who are in a dark place do not know what is around them. But now it is as though you have come out into the light, because the Lord has shown to you what is true. So live in the way that the Lord has shown to you. **9**Because just as people who have light will walk in the right way, as a result of knowing Jesus you can always live in a way that is good, right, and true. **10**As you live this way, keep learning what pleases the Lord. **11**So do not participate together with those who are doing the worthless deeds that they do in spiritual darkness. Instead, expose to everyone how worthless those deeds are. **12**Of course it is shameful for God's people to even talk about the evil things that those people do in secret, **13**but it is necessary for us to expose them so that people can know and understand that these deeds are evil. This is like when we bring something into the light in order to reveal to everyone what it truly is. Then people can examine and judge that thing that light has exposed. **14**Before you knew God you were like someone asleep or dead in a dark place. This is what believers are talking about when they say,

"You who are asleep, wake up!

You who are dead, come out of the darkness and live!

The Messiah will show you what is true,

just as a light that shines shows people what was in the darkness."

15So be very careful how you live. Do not behave as foolish people do. Instead, behave as wise people do. **16**Do the most good that you can with the time that you have, because people are doing more and more evil things every day. **17**So be wise, understand well what it is that the Lord Jesus wants you to do, and do it!

18Do not become drunk by drinking alcoholic drinks, because people cannot control themselves when they are drunk. Instead, let God's Spirit control what you do at all times. **19**Sing to each other Psalms and songs about the Messiah and songs that God's Spirit gives you. Let this music come from deep within you as sincere praise to the Lord. **20**At all times thank God the Father for everything because of what our Lord Jesus the Messiah has done for you. **21**Humbly submit yourselves to each other because you deeply respect the Messiah.

22-23 Wives should submit to their own husband's leadership as they do to the Lord Jesus because the husband is the leader of the wife as also the Messiah is the leader of the worldwide assembly of believers. He is the Savior who has saved all believers from being condemned for their sins. **24**As for wives, just as all believers submit themselves to the authority of the Messiah, in the same way wives must also submit themselves completely to the authority of their husbands.

25Each of you husbands, love your wife as much as the Messiah loved all who would believe in him. He even gave
up his own life for us on the cross **26**so that he might set us apart for himself. He purified us by telling us his plan to
forgive us and by removing our sins as though washing them away in water. **27**He did this so that he could present
the group of all believers to himself as a glorious group that does not have any sin or moral imperfection, but
instead is holy and perfect, like a glorious bride ready to meet her groom. **28**In that same way, each man should
love his own wife as much as he loves his own body. A man who loves his wife is also, by doing that, loving himself
29-30because no one ever hated his own body. Instead, he feeds his own body and cares for it, just like the Messiah
also cares for all us believers in his worldwide assembly. We have become one group of believers that belongs to
him. **31**The scriptures say this about people who marry:

“Therefore a man will leave his father and his mother and will join himself to his wife, and the two of them will
become as though they were one person.”

32There is very much about this that we cannot understand, but I am telling you that this example of a husband
and wife also helps us to understand the relationship between the Messiah and the group of people who belong to
him. **33**However, as for you, each man must love his wife just as he loves himself, and each woman must deeply
respect her husband.

Chapter 6

1As for you who are children, obey your parents as a way of serving the Lord Jesus because it is right for you to do
that. **2**God commanded in the scriptures,

“Greatly respect your father and mother.” That is the first law that God commanded in which he also promised
something. He promised,

3“If you do that, you will prosper, and you will live a long time on the earth.”

4As for you who are fathers, do not treat your children in a way that makes them become angry. Instead, bring
them up well by instructing them and by disciplining them in the manner that the Lord Jesus wants you to do.

5As for you who are slaves, very respectfully and sincerely obey those who are your masters here on the earth, just
as you obey the Messiah. **6**Obey them not only when they are watching you, as people do who only care about
appearing to work hard. Instead, work as though you were slaves of the Messiah, doing enthusiastically what God
wants you to do. **7**Serve your masters willingly, as though you are serving the Lord Jesus rather than people. **8**Do
this because you know that the Lord Jesus will reward each person for whatever good deeds that person has done.
It makes no difference whether that person was a slave or a free person.

9As for you who are masters, just like your slaves should serve you well, in the same way you must treat them well.
Stop threatening them. Do not forget that the one who is both their Lord and your Lord is in heaven and he judges
all people equally whether their position is high or low.

10Finally, rely completely on the Lord Jesus to strengthen you spiritually because he is immeasurably strong. **11**Just
as a soldier puts on all of his armor to be ready to fight his enemy, you should use every spiritual resource that God
provides for you so that you may successfully resist the devil when he cleverly schemes against you. **12**Remember
that we are not fighting against other human beings. Instead, we are fighting against the demons who have
authority to rule over the people doing evil things in this evil time, that is, against the evil spirits who live in the air.
13That is why you must use well all of the spiritual resources that God has given you, like a soldier who puts on all
of his armor. If you do that, you will be able to resist the evil spirits when they attack you. You will also be ready for
when they attack you again and able to continue to live well for God.

14You must be ready to resist the devil and his evil spirits just as soldiers must always be ready to resist the enemy.
To do that, keep thinking about the true things that God has shown you. Also, continue to act righteously. This will

protect you like a soldier's armor protects his chest. **15**Just like a soldier who keeps his boots on, be ready to go anywhere you are needed for the sake of the good news that tells people how to be at peace with God. **16**Just as a soldier holds up a shield to stop the flaming arrows that his enemy shoots at him, you must keep trusting firmly in the Lord at all times. That will protect you from all of the things that your enemy, Satan, the evil one, will try to do to harm you spiritually. **17**Also, as a soldier relies on a helmet to protect his head, rely on the fact that God has saved you. And just as a soldier uses a sword to defeat his enemies, use the weapon that God's Spirit gives you, which is the message that comes from God. **18**Whenever you pray to God and request things from him, always let God's Spirit direct you in how you pray and what you pray for. To be most effective, keep watching to see what God is doing, and be persistent as you continue to pray for all of God's people. **19**Pray for me, also, that God would tell me what I should say whenever I speak, in order that I may boldly tell others the good news about the Messiah that people did not know before. **20**It is because I have been telling people about the Messiah that I am now representing him here in prison. Pray that as I continue to tell others about the Messiah, I may speak boldly because that is how I ought to speak.

21Now in order that you may know about what is happening with me and what I am doing, Tychicus will tell you everything that is happening here. He is a fellow believer whom we all love very much, and he serves the Lord Jesus faithfully. **22**That is the reason that I am sending him to you with this letter; I want you to know how we are, and I want him to comfort and encourage you.

23I pray that God our Father and the Lord Jesus the Messiah may give to all of you fellow believers a peaceful spirit and enable you to love each other and to continue to trust in God. **24**I pray that God will continue to act graciously among all people who steadfastly love our Lord Jesus the Messiah.

Philippians

Chapter 1

1{I,} Paul, {am writing this letter} to all of God's people who are joined to the Messiah Jesus in {the city of} Philippi. Timothy is with me. We are servants of the Messiah Jesus. {We especially write this letter} for the leaders of the believers and for those who assist {them}. **2**May God our Father and our Lord Jesus the Messiah {continue to} be kind to you and {make you} peaceful.

3Every time I think about you, I thank my God whom I worship {because of you}. **4**I always pray joyfully each time I pray for all of you. **5**{The reason I pray joyfully is} because you have partnered with me in telling people the good news from the time you first believed {it} and you continue to partner with me now. **6**God started his good work within you {when you first believed in him}, and I am confident that he will continue that work until Jesus the Messiah returns. **7**I love you all greatly, so it is right for me to think about you in this way. God has kindly blessed us to share together {in this work}, both {as I endure} being a prisoner and also as I explain to people why the good news {about Jesus} is true. **8**I desire very much to be with you all, and I love you all in the same way as Jesus the Messiah loves you. God knows that this is true.

9I pray that God will enable you to love {God and others} in a way that continues to increase. As you increasingly love others, I pray that God will also help you to know {him} better and to understand {how to love others} in all situations. **10**The reason I pray this is so that you will test and choose what is most pleasing {to God} so that then you will be completely free of doing anything wrong when the Messiah returns. **11**{Instead of doing wrong things,} you will be busy doing the truly good things that Jesus the Messiah enables us to do. These things will cause people to honor and praise God.

12My fellow believers, I want you to know that the things that have happened to me have not hindered people from hearing the good news. Instead, even more people have been able to hear the good news because I am in prison. **13**In fact, all the military guards here and many other people now know that I am in prison because I proclaim the good news about the Messiah. **14**Also, because the believers {here} have seen what the Lord has done through me in prison, most of them now proclaim the good news about Jesus more courageously and fearlessly {than they did before}.

15-17 Some people are proclaiming the good news about the Messiah because they want to {obey God} and because they love {me and others}. They understand that God has appointed me to explain to people why the good news {about Jesus} is true. But some are not honest about why they are proclaiming the good news about the Messiah. They do it only because they want to promote themselves. They are envious of me and want to cause trouble for me. They think that I will suffer even more in prison as they become famous for proclaiming the good news. **18**But what they want to do to me is not important! The important thing is that people are proclaiming {the good news about} the Messiah, either for good reasons or for bad reasons. So I am rejoicing that people are spreading the message about the Messiah! And I will continue to rejoice in that!

19{I will rejoice} because I know how this situation will turn out: that God will deliver me {from prison}. He will do this because you are praying for me and because the Spirit of Jesus the Messiah is helping me. **20**{I know that this will happen, because} I very confidently expect that I will continue to faithfully honor the Messiah. {I expect and desire that} I will boldly honor the Messiah by my actions now and always, whether by the way I live or by the way I die.

21As for me, I live to honor the Messiah, and if I die, it will be even better for me. **22**But if I continue to live here in my body, I will be able to productively serve the Messiah. So I do not know which I prefer, {to live or to die}. **23**It is difficult for me to choose which I prefer, {living or dying}. I long to leave {this world} and go to be with the Messiah,

because to be with the Messiah is very much better {than being here}, **24**but I need to remain alive here on earth in order to continue to help you. **25**Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain alive with you all in order to help you to be even more joyful as you continue to trust in Jesus. **26**{I will do this} so that you will praise Jesus the Messiah even more because of me, because I will come and visit you again.

27The important thing is that you act in a way that honors the good news about the Messiah. {Do this} so that people will tell me that you are working hard together in a unified way as you resist those who oppose the message about the Messiah and as you help people to live according to the good news. {You must act in this way} whether or not I visit you again. **28**Do not let the people who are against you make you afraid by anything {that they do or say}. When they see that you are not afraid of them, they will know that God will destroy them, but he will save you. All of this is from God. **29**God does this for you because he has given you the gift of suffering for the Messiah, along with the gift of believing in him. **30**You saw how I had to resist the people who opposed me {when I was there in Philippi}. Now you have to resist the people who are opposing you in the same way. As people tell you even now, I am still struggling to resist such people.

Chapter 2

1Since the Messiah encourages us, since he comforts us with his love, since the Spirit has produced fellowship {among you}, since {God gives you} affection and compassion {toward one another}, **2**make me completely happy by doing the following things: Agree with one another, love one another, be closely united with one another, be united in your thinking. **3**Never try to selfishly make yourselves more important than others, and do not think of yourselves as better than others. Instead, be humble, and treat others as more important than yourselves. **4**Each one of you should not only be concerned about your needs. Instead, you should also be concerned about other people and their needs.

5Think the same way as the Messiah Jesus thought:

6Although he was in every way the same as God, he did not insist on keeping all the privileges of being equal with God.

7Rather, he gave up divine privileges

and became a servant to others

and became a human being. When he had become a human being,

8he humbled himself further. Specifically, {he humbled himself} by obeying God so far as to be willing to die. He was even willing to die by being crucified on a cross.

9Because {the Messiah humbly obeyed God,} God also honored him very much;

he honored him more than any other person or being,

10so that before Jesus,

every being will bow down and honor him,

beings who are in heaven and beings on earth and beings under the earth;

11and every mouth will say,

that Jesus the Messiah is Lord,

so that God the Father is honored.

12As a result of these things, my dearly loved fellow believers, as you have always obeyed God when I was with you, now that I am apart from you, you also must obey him even more. Every one of you, work with God in his saving work within you, and do this humbly reverencing God. **13**For God is doing something within you so that you will want to do—and then actually do—the good things that please him.

14Do everything without grumbling or quarreling. **15**Behave like that in order that you may be completely faultless, children of God, who keep yourselves from evil as you live among the wicked people of this world. Then, as you live among them, you will stand out brightly against the darkness of sin. **16**Tell others the message about how to have eternal life. {Do all these things} so that at the time when the Messiah returns, I will be able to rejoice that I did not work hard among you uselessly.

17And I am joyful and I will rejoice with you all, despite suffering daily or going through times when those who oppose the gospel try to kill me. I will gladly suffer along with you, adding to your service which you offer because you believe in him. **18**In the same way also, each of you should rejoice regarding these things; you should rejoice together with me!

19I am hoping that the Lord Jesus will soon allow me to be able to send Timothy to visit you. I want this visit to happen because I hope he can encourage me when he returns with news of you. **20**I have no one else like Timothy who genuinely cares for you. **21**All the others whom I might send to you are concerned only about their own matters. They are not concerned enough about what Jesus the Messiah considers important. **22**But you know that Timothy has proved that he serves the Lord and others faithfully. You know that he has served the Lord closely together with me in proclaiming the good news to people. **23**I am hoping to send Timothy to you as soon as I know what will happen to me. **24**And I am confident that the Lord will allow me to be released soon, so that I myself will also come to you.

25I have concluded that I should send Epaphroditus back to you. He is a fellow believer and my fellow worker, and he endures difficulties together with me just like soldiers endure difficulties together. He is your messenger and servant, whom you sent to help me when I was needy. **26**Epaphroditus eagerly desires to be there with you at Philippi, and he is concerned for you {that you would be worried about him} since you learned of his illness. **27**Indeed, he was so sick that he almost died. But God pitied him, and he also pitied me{, and as a result, he healed him}. God pitied me so that I would not grieve even more. **28**So I am sending him back to you as quickly as possible. I will do this in order that you may rejoice when you see him again, and so that I might grieve less. **29**Receive Epaphroditus joyfully as a fellow believer, and honor other believers who are like him. **30**Do this because, as Epaphroditus was working for the Messiah, he almost died. He knew that he might die as a result of helping me, and he nearly did die. He helped me in order to supply the things that I needed, something you could not do because you are far away from me.

Chapter 3

1Finally, my fellow believers, rejoice in who God is, and rejoice about what he has done and is doing. Though I will now write to you about the same things that I mentioned to you before, this is not tiresome for me, and it will protect you from being led astray by those who teach things that are not true.

2Guard yourselves against the ones who are like dirty dogs. Guard yourselves against the ones who teach what is false. Guard yourselves against the ones who cut their bodies. **3**But as for us—we ourselves are what it truly means to be circumcised. The Spirit of God enables us to truly worship God, and we glory in the Messiah Jesus rather than trusting in religious acts such as circumcision. **4**However, if anyone thinks they could trust in religious acts, I could; and I even more than others. {I will tell you why.}

5I was circumcised eight days after I was born. I am from the people of Israel and am a descendant of the tribe of Benjamin. I am a Hebrew who has retained the Hebrew language and way of living. As regards obeying the laws of Moses, I was a Pharisee, and therefore I strictly obeyed all the laws of Moses and teachings of the scribes. **6**With

regard to being passionate about what I believed, I was so extremely passionate about what I believed that I caused those who followed Jesus to suffer. With regard to doing what God required in the law of Moses and doing what the scribes required concerning it, I was without fault.

7But all the things that I formerly trusted in, these same things I now consider to be worthless because of the Messiah. **8**Instead, even more, I now regard all things as worthless compared to how great it is to know the Messiah, Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have willingly given up all things and I think of them as feces to throw away in order that I might have the Messiah. **9**I have willingly given up the things I formerly trusted in so that I might be fully united with the Messiah by believing in him, and not by obeying the laws that God gave to Moses. {I do this because I know} that the only way to please God is by believing in the Messiah. **10**I want to know the Messiah better and better. I want to continually experience him working powerfully in my life, just like God worked powerfully when he caused the Messiah to become alive after he had died. I also want to be continually willing to suffer in order that I may obey God, just like the Messiah suffered in order that he might obey God. I want to become like him in his death. **11**{I want all of this because} I somehow want God to cause me to live again after I have died.

12I do not claim that I have already attained this. Nor do I say that God has already finished working in me to make me like Jesus. But I earnestly try to become more and more like Jesus, because this is why Jesus the Messiah took hold of me. **13**My fellow believers, I certainly do not think that I have already become completely like Jesus. Nor have fully known him. Rather, I have determined to forget about the things that are in the past and to work hard for the things that are in front of me. **14**Instead, I concentrate only on continuing to become more and more like Jesus until I die. As a result, because of my relationship with Jesus the Messiah, God will reward me in heaven. **15**So then, all of us who are mature believers should think this same way. But if you think differently about anything I have just written, God also will show this to you. **16**However, regarding the true things that God has already revealed to us, let us all conduct our lives according to these things.

17My fellow believers, join together in imitating me, and observe closely those people who live as we do. **18**There are many people who act in a way that shows that they oppose the message about the Messiah dying on the cross. I have told you about these people many times before, and now I am sad, even crying, as I tell you about them again. **19**God will severely punish these people. These people serve their physical desires rather than God, and they are proud of the very things of which they should be ashamed. These people only think about earthly things instead of heavenly things. **20**As for us, we are citizens of heaven, and it is from heaven that we eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus the Messiah to return and rescue us. **21**God will change the weak and humble bodies that we have now to be bodies like the glorious resurrected body of Jesus. He will do this by his power, by which he is able to control all things.

Chapter 4

1My fellow believers, I love you, and I greatly desire to see you. I rejoice because of you; you are the reason God will reward me. In the way that I have just described to you {in this letter}, continue to be steadfastly committed to the Lord, my fellow believers whom I love.

2I urge you, Euodia, and I urge you, Syntyche, to again have a peaceful relationship with each other, because you are both joined to the Lord. **3**And I also urge you, my faithful partner, to please help these women. {Please help them because} they have helped me spread the good news, as have Clement and the rest of my fellow laborers, whose names God has written in his book of those who will live with him forever.

4Always rejoice in who God is and what he has done and is doing! I say again, rejoice! **5**Act in such a way that all people see that you are gentle. {Do this because} the Lord will return soon. **6**Do not worry about anything. Instead, in every situation pray to God, and tell him exactly what you need, and ask him to help you. And thank God for all he does for you. **7**As a result God will enable you not to worry about anything, and he will protect how you think and feel, as you are joined to the Messiah Jesus.

8Finally, my fellow believers, think about whatever is true, whatever is worth honoring, whatever is right, whatever is faultless, whatever is pleasing, whatever is worth admiring, whatever is good, whatever is worth praising: These are the things that you should always be thinking about. **9**Continually do the things that I have taught you and the things you have heard me say and the things you have seen me do. If you do these things, the God who causes us to be at peace will be with you.

10I rejoice greatly and thank the Lord, because now, after some time, {by sending money to me} you have once again shown that you are concerned about me. Indeed, you were concerned about me all the time, but you had no opportunity to show it. **11**Do not think that I am saying this because I am concerned about lacking something I need. Rather, I have learned how to be happy no matter what situation I am in. **12**I have learned how to be happy when I do not have what I need and how to be happy when I have more than I need. I have learned how to be happy when I am hungry and when I have plenty of food to eat. I have learned how to be happy in all circumstances and at all times. **13**Because the Messiah strengthens me, I am able to respond well to every situation. **14**Nevertheless, you did the right thing to help me in my difficult situation.

15You yourselves, my friends there at Philippi, know that during the time I first proclaimed the good news to you, when I left there to go out from the province of Macedonia, no assembly of believers except you sent me funds or helped me in any way! **16**Even when I was in the city of Thessalonica, more than once you sent me money to supply what I needed. **17**I do not say this because I desire that you give me money. Instead, I desire that God will abundantly reward you {as a result of your helping me}.

18You have given me a very generous gift, and, as a result, I have all I require and more. I have an abundant supply of what I need, because you sent Epaphroditus to me with your gift. God considers that your gift is very acceptable, and he is very pleased with it. **19**God, whom I serve, will supply everything you need, because you belong to Jesus the Messiah and because he owns all things. **20**Now, may our God and Father be praised and honored forever! Amen!

21Greet for me all God's people there. They all belong to Jesus the Messiah. The believers with me greet you also. **22**All of God's people here send their greetings to you. The fellow believers who work in the palace of Caesar, the emperor, especially send their greetings to you.

23I desire and pray that our Lord Jesus the Messiah will continue to act kindly toward you all. Amen.

Colossians

Chapter 1

1{I,} Paul, {write this letter to you,} and Timothy our fellow believer {is with me}. God sent me to represent the Messiah Jesus, because that is what God chose to do. **2**{I send this letter} to you who are God's people and faithful fellow believers united to the Messiah, {who live} in {the city of} Colossae. {May} God our Father and the Lord Jesus the Messiah {continue to} be kind to you and make you peaceful.

3We pray for you very often. {When we do,} we thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, **4**{because} have learned that you trust in the Messiah Jesus and that you love all God's people. **5**{You do these things} because you are confidently waiting for everything that God is keeping for you in heaven. You first learned about all that God has for you when you heard the true message, {which is} the good news about the Messiah. **6**Just as you heard and believed this good news {in Colossae}, increasing numbers of people in many places are also hearing and believing it. These people are living in a different way now, just as you have been living in a different way since you first learned {about it} and truly experienced how God acts kindly {toward us}. **7**This is what Epaphras told you {would happen}. He works with us for the Messiah, and we love him. He faithfully serves the Messiah as our representative. **8**He told us that you love {all God's people}, just as God's Spirit {has empowered you to do}.

9Because of everything that Epaphras told us, since the time when he first told us {about you}, we have joined him in consistently praying for you. {When we pray for you,} we ask God to show you everything that he wants you to do and {to make you} able to understand everything that God's Spirit {is teaching you}. **10**{We have been praying that you know what God wants} so that you can live in a way that honors the Lord and pleases him in every way. {When you live this way, you will be} doing every sort of good thing and continually knowing God better. **11**{As you live this way,} God will greatly strengthen you to be able to patiently endure in all situations, and to do so joyfully. God can strengthen you greatly because he is gloriously powerful. **12**{Then you will continually} thank {God our} Father, {because} he has made you worthy to take part in everything that he has to give to his people when they are with him.

13God our Father has delivered us from the evil one, who used to control us, and he has given us to his Son, whom he loves, so that now we can obey his Son. **14**Because we are united to his Son, God has set us free; {that is,} he has forgiven our sins. **15**God's Son perfectly reveals who God is, even though no one can see God. The Son existed before God created anything, and he has first place over everything that God has created. **16**{You can know that the Son existed before anything else existed and has first place over everything} because the Father and the Son together created everything that exists. {This includes} everything in heaven and everything on earth, and everything that we can see and everything that we cannot see, {including the spiritual beings} such as thrones, dominions, rulers, and authorities. The Father and the Son together created everything, and everything exists to honor the Son. **17**The Son existed before any of creation existed, and he sustains and connects all of it. **18**In regard to the church, {that is, all believers,} he rules over it as people's heads rule over their bodies. He made it possible for the church to begin {when he was} the first person to live again after dying{, never to die again}. Because of these things about him, he is greater and more important than anything and anybody else. **19**{The Son rules over everything} because the Son is fully God, just as the Father gladly willed him to be. **20**{God the Father} also {gladly chose to work} through the Son to reconcile to himself everything {and every person that he created} in the whole universe. {God did this} through his Son when his Son died on the cross, which made everything peaceful between God and his creation.

21Before {you believed in the Messiah}, you did not want to be close {to God}, and you were hostile {to him} because everything you thought and did was evil. **22**But {that has all changed} now {that you believe in Jesus!} God the Father has repaired the relationship between himself and you {by working} through his Son when his Son

became human and died. {God the Father repaired the relationship} so that you can dwell with him as people who are completely free from sin. **23**{This is all true about you} as long as you continue confidently to believe {in the Messiah}, and as long as you do not give up confidently hoping {for God to do what he has promised} in the good news that you heard and that people all over the world have heard. I, Paul, serve God {by proclaiming to people} this same good news.

24At the present time I suffer cheerfully {because it is} for your benefit. I am suffering physically to complete {my part of} the suffering that the Messiah began on behalf of {his people,} the church, which is like the Messiah's own body. **25**God called me to serve his church, and he appointed me {specifically} to carry out his plan that concerns you. {My part of this plan is} to proclaim {to you non-Jews} the full message from God. **26**God kept this message a secret, concealing it from people for a long time. But now he has made the message known to his people. **27**God has been wanting to tell his people this very glorious message that was secret, which applies to non-Jews {as well as to Jews}. The secret is that the Messiah is united to you {non-Jews}, which means that you can confidently expect to become glorious beings like the Messiah. **28**{This is the Messiah} whom we announce {to everyone}. {When we talk about him,} we warn and teach each person as wisely as we can. {We do these things} so that each of these people may become spiritually mature in each person's union with the Messiah. **29**I work hard in all that I do in order to accomplish that goal. {I can do this} because the Messiah is powerfully enabling me to do it.

Chapter 2

1{I write these things} because I want to inform you about how hard I am working. {I work hard} for you, for the fellow-believers who live in {the city of} Laodicea, and for all fellow-believers who have not met me in person. **2**{I work this hard} in order to encourage all of you {who have not met me} so that you unite yourselves together with love for each other. {I want you} to completely and confidently understand the secret that God had previously kept hidden. {This secret is about} the Messiah. **3**The Messiah is the one who knows all of God's wonderful, wise plan. **4**I am telling you about this secret in order that no person who argues persuasively will be able to convince you to believe what is not true. **5**{You can know that those who argue persuasively are wrong} because I care about you and think about you, even though I am not with you in person. I am very happy to see that you are behaving properly and that you firmly believe in the Messiah.

6Now {that I have told you the truth about the good news}, I want you to behave in a way that fits with how God has united you to the Messiah. You should keep behaving as you did when you accepted the Messiah Jesus the Lord. **7**{Behaving in this way includes} staying firmly united to him, just as a plant's roots hold it firmly in place. {It also includes} depending completely on him, just as a house stands on its foundation. {It also includes} confidently trusting the Messiah, just as Epaphras taught you, and giving thanks more and more.

8Be on the alert so that no one who tries to lead you away from the truth will succeed. Anyone who tries to lead you away will use human thinking that is meaningless and deceptive. {Such a false message comes} from what older generations teach younger generations and from what humans normally think about the world, not from the Messiah. **9**{I mention the Messiah} because he, a human, is fully God. **10**In addition, you have everything you need since God has united you to the Messiah, who rules over {the spiritual beings, including} every ruler and every authority. **11**When God united you to the Messiah, it was as if God the Father had circumcised you. I do not mean that a human physically cut flesh off you. {Rather, instead of cutting off flesh,} God removed your weak and sinful parts. {God} circumcised {you in this way} through what the Messiah accomplished. **12**{Here is another way to understand what God has done for you:} when they baptized you, it was as if {you died and} people buried you {because God the Father included you} when {the Messiah died and} people buried him. And it was as if God the Father brought you back to life {because he included you} when he brought the Messiah back to life. {This happened} because you believed that God the Father works powerfully, particularly when he brought the Messiah back to life. **13**You used to be spiritually dead, because you {often} sinned against God and because you were non-Jews {and not part of God's people}. But God the Father brought you back to life spiritually {because he included you} when he brought the Messiah back to life. {This means that} he has forgiven us for all the wrong things we have done against him. **14**It was as if God had an official list of the debts we owe{, which are our sins}. {When he

forgave us,} he wiped out that list of sins that counted against us, and he prevented it from coming between us and him. God accomplished this when {the Messiah died on the cross, as surely as if} he had nailed the list to the cross. **15**Moreover, God defeated the spiritual beings that rule the world, and he publicly showed {that he defeated them}, just as if he had paraded them around as prisoners. {God did this when the Messiah died} on the cross.

16Because of these things {that God has done for you}, do not worry about what other people say you should do. {They may have opinions} about what to eat and what to drink. {They may have opinions about} what special days to observe, including days for worshipping God, days for celebrating when there is a new moon, or days for resting. **17**{God used} these things {to} point to what he had planned for the future, which is the coming of the Messiah himself. **18**{You will meet some people} who enjoy pretending to be humble and worshipping angels and who love to talk about {amazing} things that they have seen. They act like they are great—although without good reason, because they think only in human ways. Do not listen to these people who are trying to take away what God has ready to give to you. **19**{These people} are not remaining loyal to the Messiah. It is he who leads the church, just like people's heads lead their bodies. The head directs how the whole body, each and every part, receives what it needs and how it works together. In this way the body grows. Just like that, the Messiah directs the church so that it grows as God wants it to grow.

20It is as if you have died, {because God included you} when the Messiah died. {This frees you} from the spiritual beings that rule this world. So, you should not obey the rules {that these people have given to you}. {Doing so would mean that} you were really still part of this world. **21**{These rules include commands like these:} "Do not feel {certain things}!" "Do not try {certain foods}!" "Do not take hold of {certain things}!" **22**All such rules concern things that perish when people make use of them. Further, people{, not God,} teach and require {these rules}. **23**Following these rules may seem to be a wise thing to do for people who worship God the way they want to, who pretend to be humble, and who treat their bodies badly {as part of their religion}. However, {following these rules} will not help you stop sinning.

Chapter 3

1To return {to what I said before}, it is as if God brought you back to life {because he included you} when he brought the Messiah back to life. {Because of this,} I want you to stay focused on what is in heaven, since the Messiah is there. He sits next to God the Father on the throne {and rules everything}. **2**I want you to desire what {God has ready for you} in heaven, not what {you could have here} on earth. **3**{You should think this way} because it is as if you have died. You are spiritually alive only because God has united you to the Messiah in close relationship with himself, and this cannot be seen {on earth right now}. **4**You are alive because God has united you to the Messiah. {Therefore,} when {he returns again to earth and} everyone sees him, at that time you will be with him. Then, everyone will see that you too have become glorious {beings like him}.

5Because {this is your destiny}, think of the desires you have to do evil things in this world as enemies that you must kill. {The evil things that you might desire include} having improper sex, doing impure things, enjoying wrong emotions, desiring evil things, and wanting more than you need, which is the same as worshiping another god. **6**Because people have these desires, God is angry with them and will punish them. **7**You, just like them, used to have these desires to do evil things. {That was} when you acted out these desires. **8**But now {that you have believed}, you must stop behaving in all evil ways. {These evil ways include} acting in angry ways, being angry with others, desiring to hurt others, talking bad about others, and speaking shameful words. **9**You must not tell lies to one another. You are not the person you used to be, a person who normally behaved in these evil ways. **10**You are a new person now, {a person} in whom God is working to make you know him more. {You are now a person} who is like God, who turned you into this new person. **11**Since {you are all new people}, {it is not important} whether anyone is a non-Jew or a Jew, or whether anyone is circumcised or not, or whether anyone is a foreigner or an uncivilized person, or whether anyone is a slave or not. Instead, it is the Messiah who is most important, and God has united him to all {of you}.

12God has chosen you, he has set you apart as his own people, and he loves you. Because of these things and because {you are new people}, you must always behave properly {towards others}. {This includes} caring about them, being kind to them, not being proud, not behaving harshly, and taking a long time to become angry. **13**You must not easily become irritated with one another. When you blame other people for the things they have done, you must forgive them. You should imitate how the Lord forgave you by {forgiving one another}. **14**Finally, {what is} more important than everything {I have said} so far is that you love one another. By doing this you will unite yourselves together, just as God has called you to do.

15You must make the peace which the Messiah has given you a primary factor when you choose what to do. {You must do this} because God has chosen you to have peace as he unites you closely together, as closely as if you were one person's body. Also, you must give thanks to God. **16**You must focus completely on the message about the Messiah as you think and act. You must teach and instruct one another very wisely using songs from the Scriptures, songs about Jesus, and songs that the Holy Spirit has given to you. You must thankfully and sincerely sing to God.

17Whenever you say or do anything, {you should behave} in every situation {as people who} represent the Lord Jesus. Also, you should thank God, {who is our} Father. {You can do this only} because of {the work of} the Messiah.

18Wives must treat their husbands as the leaders {in their families}, since this is appropriate behavior for those whom God has united to the Lord. **19**Husbands must love their wives and not treat them harshly.

20Children must obey their parents in every circumstance. This pleases God {and is appropriate} for those whom God has united to the Lord. **21**Fathers must not make their children angry. Otherwise, the children may feel like giving up.

22Slaves must obey those who are their masters in this world in every circumstance. {They should obey} not just when their masters are watching, which is how those who want to please only humans behave. Instead, {they should obey their masters} sincerely because they treat the Lord with reverence. **23**You must do whatever work you have to do diligently, as if {you were working} for the Lord instead of for merely human masters. **24**{You must obey and serve in this way} because you know that the Lord will justly repay you by giving you what he has kept for you. {Remember that} the Lord Messiah is {the real master} for whom you are working. **25**{You must remember who the real master is} because God will punish anyone who does wrong in proportion to those wrong actions. {This is because} God does not judge people based on how they look or who they are but on what they have done.

Chapter 4

1Masters must treat their slaves justly and fairly. {You who are masters must do this} because you know that you too serve a Master{, one who is} in heaven.

2Pray {to God} persistently. Pay attention when you pray, and give thanks {to God}. **3**When you are praying, pray for us too. {Pray} that God will make it possible for us to freely proclaim our message, which is the secret about the Messiah that we now share with others. Because {we proclaimed} this message, I am now in prison. **4**{Pray} that I am able to explain the good news clearly, since this is what God has called me to do.

5Behave wisely around those who do not believe in the Messiah. Take advantage of every opportunity {you have to do this}. **6**{When you talk with them,} you must always speak in a pleasant and interesting way. {When you do this,} you will know the best way to respond to each person.

7Tychicus will tell you everything that has been happening to me. {He is} a fellow believer whom I love, who helps me faithfully, and who serves together with me as a man whom God has united to the Lord. **8**I am sending Tychicus to you {with this letter} because I want you to know how we are doing and because Tychicus will help you live confidently. **9**{I am sending him to you} with Onesimus, who is a faithful fellow believer whom I love. He is from your group. Tychicus and Onesimus will tell you about everything {that has been happening} here.

10Aristarchus, who is in prison with me, and Mark, who is Barnabas' cousin, send their regards to you. You already know that you should welcome Mark if he visits you. **11**Jesus, whom you may know by the name Justus, also {sends his regards}. These men{—Aristarchus, Mark, and Justus—}are the only Jewish believers who are working with me for the sake of God's kingdom. They have encouraged me {in this work}. **12**Epaphras, who is from your group {and} who serves the Messiah Jesus, sends his regards to you. He prays earnestly for you very often. {He prays} that God will make you able to be what God has called you to be and to be sure of everything that God wants {you to do}. **13**{You know that he prays this way for you} because I can personally affirm this about him. {I tell you} that he works very hard for you, for the people {who live} in the city of Laodicea, and for the people {who live} in the city of Hierapolis. **14**Luke the doctor, whom I love, and Demas send their regards to you.

15Give our regards to the fellow believers who live in Laodicea, to Nympha, and to the group of believers {that meets} in Nympha's home. **16**After the person who reads this letter to you finishes it, send {it to Laodicea} so that someone can read it to the group of believers there, too. Also, {ask for} the letter I sent to the believers in Laodicea so that you too can read it. **17**{You must} tell Archippus to make sure that he completes the task that God gave him to do when God united him to the Messiah.

18I, Paul, send my regards {to you}. I am writing {these last words} myself {instead of having my scribe write them}. You must not forget that I am in prison. {I pray that God will} be gracious to you.

1 Thessalonians

Chapter 1

1{I,} Paul, {write this letter to you,} and Silas and Timothy {are with me}. {I send this letter} to {you,} the group of believers in the city of Thessalonica. God the Father has united you to himself and to the Lord Jesus the Messiah. {May God continue to be} kind to you and {make you} peaceful.

2We pray for you persistently. {When we do,} we consistently thank God for all of you. **3**We thank our God and Father for what you do because you trust {in him}. {We thank him} for the way that you help people because you love {them}. {We thank him} for the way that you patiently endure because you confidently expect our Lord Jesus the Messiah {to come again}. **4**{We thank God because} we know that he chose you, fellow believers whom God loves. **5**{We know that God chose you,} because when we told you the good news, we did not just say words. Rather, the Holy Spirit also powerfully worked {through us}, and we were sure that the good news was true. In the same way, you remember how we acted to help you when we were with you. **6**As for you, you acted as we do and as the Lord {Jesus} did. Specifically, when you believed the good news, you suffered greatly, but the Holy Spirit caused you to rejoice. **7**Because {you acted in those ways}, all the believers in the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia want to act as you do. **8**In fact, many people {who live} in the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia have heard the message about the Lord {Jesus} because of you. Even more, people in very many places have heard about how you trust in God. As a result, we do not need to tell people anything {about what God has done for you}. **9**Indeed, those same people tell others about how well it went when we visited you. {They say that} you stopped caring about other gods {and began to focus on} God so that you could worship and obey him, the only real God. **10**Further, {they say that you focused on God} so that you could eagerly anticipate when God's Son {will come back} from {where he is in} heaven. God made Jesus alive again, and Jesus is the one who will save us {who believe in him} at the time when God will punish people {for their sins}.

Chapter 2

1Fellow believers, you surely remember that when we visited you, it was very productive. **2**As you remember, when we were in the city of Philippi, people hurt us and abused us. However, our God made us confident when we told you the good news from God, despite how hard it was {to do}. **3**{When} we encouraged {you to believe the good news, we did} not convince you to believe an incorrect message. {We did} not say or do unclean things. {We did} not deceive you. **4**Rather, we speak as people whom God has tested and approved to proclaim the good news. We are not {trying} to please people. Instead, {we are trying to please} God. He is the one who tests what we think and desire. **5**In fact, when we visited you, we did not flatter you or pretend not to want money. You remember {that this is true}, and God testifies {that it is true}. **6**{We did} not desire that people would honor us. {We did not desire this} from you or from anyone else. **7**Since the Messiah sent us to represent him, we could have required you to obey us and give us whatever we wanted. However, when we were with you, we acted as gentle as babies. {We were} like mothers who lovingly take care of their children. **8**Since we care for you in those ways, we delighted to share the good news from God with you. Even more, {we delighted to share} our own lives {with you}. {That is} because we started to love you {very much}. **9**Fellow believers, {I know that} you recall how hard we labored. We worked all day long so that we would not have to bother any of you {by asking for money}. {That was how we acted when} we told you the good news from God. **10**Both you and God can testify that we did what was good and right {when we were} with you who trust {in God}. **11**You remember that {we behaved} toward every one of you as a father {behaves toward} his own children. **12**{That means that we} were teaching you and urging you so that you would live the way that God wants {his people to live}. He is the one who invites you to participate in his kingdom and in how great he is.

13Further, we consistently thank God that you accepted what you heard about God in our message. You did not consider it to be a merely human message. Rather, {you considered it to be} a message from God, which is what it really is. This message is changing you who trust {in God}. **14-15**Now {unbelieving} Jews not only killed the prophets {long ago}, but they also {recently} killed the Lord Jesus and forced us to leave {your city}. These unbelieving Jews also persecuted the believers {who live in the region of Judea}. In fact, fellow believers, you have become like these groups of believers in Judea whom God has united to Jesus the Messiah. {That is} because people from your own country persecute you, just as {the unbelieving Jews persecuted the believers in Judea}. These {unbelieving} Jews do not please God, and they act against most people. **16**They try to stop us from telling {the good news} to non-Jews, {which we do} so that God saves non-Jews. So, {these unbelieving Jews} consistently continue to sin. However, God will completely punish them!

17In contrast, fellow believers, we very eagerly desired to be with you in person, even though we had to leave you for a little while. Although we were physically absent, we always thought and cared about you. **18**Indeed, we wanted to visit you. Specifically, I myself, Paul, {tried to visit} several times. However, {each time,} Satan stopped us {from visiting}. **19**{We wanted to visit you} because it is you who enable us to hope and to rejoice and to say great things about you, who honor us. {We know that this will be true} when our Lord Jesus examines everyone after he returns to this world. **20**Indeed, you honor us and make us rejoice!

Chapter 3

1So then, because we {felt like we} could not possibly wait any longer, we decided that just Silas and I should stay behind in the city of Athens. **2**Then, Silas and I had Timothy visit you. {He is} our fellow believer and serves God by {proclaiming} the good news about the Messiah. {We had him visit you} so that he could support and encourage you as you trust {in God}. **3**That way, when people hurt {you}, you do not become unsure {as you trust in God}. In fact, you are well aware that {God} already decided that people would hurt us {believers}. **4**{You are well aware of that} because, while we {apostles} were visiting you, we warned you ahead of time that others were about to hurt us {believers}. You are well aware that this is exactly what occurred. **5**Because {others have hurt us believers}, and because I {felt like I} could not possibly wait any longer, I had {Timothy} visit you. {I wanted} to learn if you were still trusting {in God}. {I was concerned that} the devil might have {succeeded in} tempting you {to stop trusting in God}. {If that were true,} how hard we had worked among you would have accomplished nothing!

6However, Timothy recently returned to Silas and me after visiting you. He gave us good news about how much you trust {God} and love {each other}. {He told us} that whenever you think about us, it makes you happy. {He also told us that} you desire to be with us, just as we {desire to be with} you. **7**Fellow believers, because of what {Timothy told us}, although people were persecuting and hurting us often, God used how you continue to trust {in him} to encourage us that you {are doing well}. **8**Indeed, since you continue {to trust} in the Lord {Jesus}, we feel much better now! **9**In fact, we cannot thank God enough for you! We are extremely happy about you {whenever we pray} to our God. **10**All day long we urgently ask {God} to allow us to visit you and help you increase how much you trust {in God}.

11{We pray that} God our Father and our Lord Jesus will enable us to visit you {again}! **12**{We pray that} the Lord {Jesus} will cause you always to love each other and all people more and more. That is how we love you! **13**{We pray those things} so that God will make you spiritually strong. {That way,} God our Father will consider you to be faultlessly pure. {He will do that} when our Lord Jesus returns to this world, {bringing} with him everyone who belongs to him. May it be so!

Chapter 4

1So then, fellow believers, {here is} the rest {of what I want to write to you}. {When we visited you,} we taught you how you should behave in a way that honors God, and that is how you are behaving! Now we urge you, because

God has united you to the Lord Jesus, to continue to behave in this way more and more. **2**You remember what we commanded you {to do as we spoke} for the Lord Jesus.

3For example, God desires that you act in pure ways. That means that you should not have improper sex. **4**{That also means that} you all should learn to control how you desire to have sex. {That way,} you will be acting purely and honoring {God}. **5**{You should} not have any improper sex that you greatly desire. That is what non-Jews who do not trust in God do. **6**{You should do what God desires} concerning having sex so that you will not sin by mistreating a fellow believer. {You should avoid sinning in that way} because the Lord {Jesus} will punish {all people who have} any kind of improper sex. We already declared that to you {when we were with you}. **7**Indeed, God chose us so that we would belong to him. {He did} not {choose us} so that we would do impure things. **8**So then, anyone who disobeys {what we have commanded you} is not {simply} disobeying a human. Rather, {that person is disobeying} God. He is the one who sends the Holy Spirit to you.

9We do not have to tell you anything about how to care for fellow believers. {That is} because God instructed you so that you care for each other. **10**{That is} also because you {already} care for all the fellow believers throughout Macedonia {province}. Fellow believers, we exhort you {to care for fellow believers} even more. **11**{We} also {exhort you} to try very earnestly to live peacefully, to focus on your own tasks, and to earn what you need to live. In fact, {that is} what we told you to do {when we were with you}. **12**{We urge you to do these things,} so that you can set a good example toward those who do not believe in the Messiah {by how modestly you live.} Then you would not have to depend {on others} to provide what you need {to live}.

13Also, {our} fellow believers in the Messiah, we want you to be aware about {what will happen to} believers in the Messiah who are dead. You should not be like the rest of humanity, which does not believe in the Messiah. They are deeply sad because they do not confidently expect that people will resurrect after death. **14**Certainly, we {apostles} are convinced that Jesus died and resurrected. This is why we also are convinced that God will {resurrect} the dead people who are united to Jesus. Then God will send them back with Jesus {when he returns to earth again}. **15**In fact, what we {apostles} are now telling you is a message from the Lord {Jesus himself}. When the Lord {Jesus} comes again{, all believers in the Messiah will greet him}. First, those {believers in the Messiah} who have {already} died will certainly greet him, and then we {believers in the Messiah} who are still alive. **16**{This is how} the Lord {Jesus} will come down from heaven: the Lord {Jesus} himself will personally give the command {for all to resurrect}. The chief angel will shout. God's trumpet will blast. Then {all} the dead who are united to the Messiah will be the first to resurrect {from the earth}. **17**After that, God will snatch up all of us believers in the Messiah who are still alive on earth so that we can meet the Lord {Jesus} in the air. Both groups of believers in the Messiah will meet together on the clouds. This is how we will remain together with the Lord {Jesus} forever! **18**As a result, you must encourage each other with this message!

Chapter 5

1{Now I want you to be aware of the timing of our Lord's return to earth} Our fellow believers in the Messiah, we do not {really} need to write {anything} to you about the specific time {of our Lord's return}. **2**This is because you yourselves already know accurately about the time when the Lord {Jesus} will come back. You also know that he will come {unexpectedly}, like when a robber comes at night. **3**{The Lord Jesus} will come at a time when people are saying, "{We are} safe and secure!" Then, suddenly, God will overwhelm and destroy them! It will be similar to when a pregnant woman cannot escape being overwhelmed by labor pains. In the same way, those people can never escape {when God destroys}! **4**However, {our} fellow believers in the Messiah, you are not people who are unaware of what will happen, like when people are in the darkness. This is why, when the Lord Jesus returns to earth to punish the people who do not belong to him, he will not surprise you as if he were a thief. **5**{Since} you are all God's children, {you should live ready for Jesus to return to earth}, like people who are in the light or awake during day are aware of what is happening. We are not {Satan's children,} who live unaware of what will happen, like people at night or in the darkness {who cannot perceive as well}. **6**So, this is why, {as God's children, we must live ready for what will happen. We must} not live unaware of what will happen like the rest of humanity, who are just like people

who are sleeping. Instead, we must stay alert and remain attentive, {expecting Jesus to return to earth}. **7**It is well known that when people are unaware of what will happen, it is {usually} at night, when they are sleeping. And when people get drunk, they are not ready for what will happen. They {usually} get drunk at night, {when they cannot perceive things as well}. **8**But {we who are ready for the Lord Jesus to return to earth do not live unaware of what will happen like these people. Since} we are ready, we must remain attentive. We must fully arm ourselves {like soldiers}. Faithful love {towards God should cover our chests} like a breastplate. Being confident {that God} will save us {should fully protect our heads} like a helmet.

9Since {we are his people,} God did not destine that he would punish us {for our sins}. Instead, he destined that our Lord, Jesus the Messiah, would preserve and save us. **10**Jesus died in our place so that we would live {forever} with him. {This is true,} whether we are alive or dead {when he returns to earth}. **11**Since this is true, continue to habitually encourage and support each and every one {of your fellow believers in the Messiah}!

12Finally, {our} fellow believers in the Messiah, we request that you give recognition to your spiritual leaders who work hard among you, in the same way you would give recognition to the Lord {Jesus}. You should also give them recognition because they continually warn and instruct you {about living like believers in the Messiah should}. **13**Because {of how hard} they work {for you,} we also request {that} you abundantly love your spiritual leaders by being considerate of them. {We also urge} that you keep living peacefully with each other.

14{Our} fellow believers in the Messiah, we now urge that you warn and instruct those who live inappropriately. We {also} urge that you cheer up those who are discouraged. We {also} urge that you support those who are weak. We {also} urge that you live patiently with every one {of your fellow believers in the Messiah}. **15**If someone treats you badly, make sure that you do not treat them badly in return. Instead, whenever {you can,} actively look for ways to kindly treat every {fellow believer in the Messiah}.

16Be joyful all the time! **17**Constantly pray! **18**Keep giving thanks to God in every situation! Indeed, God desires for all of you who are united to Jesus the Messiah to do all these things.

19Do not {try to stop} the {Holy} Spirit {from working among you. That would be like someone trying to} extinguish {a fire}! **20**{In other words,} do not scorn prophecies {that the Holy Spirit gives to other believers in the Messiah}! **21**{Instead,} keep evaluating all {of the prophecies and} retain {only} those that prove to be excellent. **22**Refrain from any thing that appears to be wicked!

23In summary, we pray that God will personally make you live like people who completely belong to him. God is the one who gives his people peace. We also pray that God will preserve you completely innocent for the time when our Lord Jesus the Messiah arrives on earth again. **24**The faithful God {continually} summons all of you {to live like those who completely belong to him. So, you can be certain that} he will also do {whatever is necessary for you to be able to live like those who completely belong to him}.

25{Our} fellow believers in the Messiah, we also ask that you keep praying for me, for Silas, and for Timothy! **26**When you meet together {for worship}, affectionately greet each of your fellow believers in the Messiah in a way that is appropriate for those who belong to God. **27**I want you to swear an oath to the Lord {Jesus}, that you will read this letter to all the believers in the Messiah {among you}! **28**May our Lord Jesus the Messiah {continue to} act kindly toward all of you!

2 Thessalonians

Chapter 1

1{I,} Paul, {am writing this letter.} Silas and Timothy {are with me. We are sending this letter} to {you,} the group of believers in the city of Thessalonica, who belong to God our Father and to {our} Lord Jesus the Messiah. **2**{May} God our Father and our Lord Jesus the Messiah {continue to be} kind to you and {make you} peaceful.

3Our fellow believers, we should thank God very frequently for you{, and we certainly do}! It is very appropriate that we should do this, because you are trusting in the Lord Jesus more and more, and because every one of you is loving each of the others more and more. **4**As a result, we keep proudly talking about you to the other groups of believers belonging to God. We tell them how you patiently endure {suffering} and how you continue trusting in the Lord Jesus, even though other people continually cause you to suffer.

5{We can clearly see that God has made you able to stay faithful to Jesus while people make you suffer.} From that we know that God judges justly, because it means that he considers you to be worthy of being part of his people forever. That is what you are suffering for. **6**Since God judges justly, he will certainly also cause suffering for those people who are making you suffer. **7**He will also cause the people who are afflicting you to stop doing it. He will also do that for us. This will happen when our Lord Jesus shows himself to everyone as he returns from heaven with his powerful angels. **8**Then with blazing fire he will punish those people who have rejected God, those who refuse to accept the good news about our Lord Jesus. **9**These people will experience the direct result {of rejecting God}. They will be apart from the Lord {Jesus} forever, where they will never know how wonderfully powerful he is, and where they will be always dying. **10**{This will happen} when the Lord Jesus comes back from heaven at the time that God has decided. As a result, all we who are his people will praise him and marvel at him. {You will be there, too,} because you believed us when we told you the things about Jesus that we knew to be true.

11We frequently ask God {to strengthen you spiritually so} that you might praise Jesus like this. We pray that the God whom we worship will make you worthy to be the new people that he has invited you to be. We pray that he will empower you to accomplish every good thing that you want to do because God has inspired you to do it. **12**We pray this because we want you to praise our Lord Jesus, and we want him to honor you. This will happen because the God whom we worship and our Lord Jesus the Messiah are exceedingly kind to you.

Chapter 2

1Now {I want to write to you} about the time when our Lord Jesus the Messiah will return and will gather us to himself. My fellow believers, I urge you **2**to think calmly about any message that may have come to you that says that the Lord Jesus has already returned to earth. Do not let this kind of message upset you. It does not matter if the message comes from a spirit or if it comes from a person or if it is in a letter that someone claims that I wrote. **3**Do not allow anyone to persuade you to believe any such message.

It is not true, because other things {that have not yet happened} must happen before {the Lord returns}. Before the Lord returns, a large number of people will rebel against God. They will accept and obey a certain man who will oppose everything that God has said. (After some time, God will destroy him.) **4**This man will say that he is greater than everything that people consider to be God and everything that people worship. He will oppose both. As a result, he will even sit {in God's place} in God's temple to proclaim that he himself is God! **5**I am sure that you remember that I told you all about these things while I was still with you {there in Thessalonica}.

6You also know what is preventing this man from showing himself to everybody now. He will not be able to show himself until the time that God has set for him. **7**Clearly, people are already opposing what God has said, for

reasons that only believers can understand. But someone is preventing this man {from revealing himself} now, and he will continue to prevent this man until God tells him to stop preventing this man. **8**It is then that God will allow this man who completely rejects God's instructions to show himself to everyone. (In the end, Jesus will return. When this man sees Jesus, this man will become completely powerless. Then the Lord Jesus will speak a command that will destroy this man.)

9{But before Jesus destroys this man,} Satan will work very powerfully through this man. Satan will empower this man to do all kinds of supernatural deeds that look like the miracles that God does. **10**This man will be very wicked and will deceive very many people. These people will perish because they did not accept the true message about Jesus as highly valuable, so God will not save them. **11**Because these people reject the true message about Jesus, God enables them to think falsely so that they will believe this man's lies. **12**God does that so that he may justly condemn all those who refused to believe the true message about Jesus, people who instead preferred to do things that are wicked.

13But we should always thank God for you, our fellow believers, you whom our Lord Jesus loves. We should do this because God chose you to be among the first people to believe the true message about Jesus. God chose you to be among the first people that he would save and set apart for himself by means of his Spirit. **14**God invited you to belong to him as we proclaimed to you the good news about Jesus so that God might honor you in some of the same ways that he honors our Lord Jesus the Messiah.

15So, our fellow believers, continue to strongly believe in the Messiah. Continue believing the true teachings that we have passed on to you when we spoke to you and wrote a letter to you.

16-17 God our Father loves us. Because he is extremely kind to us, he will continue to encourage us forever, and we can expect to receive good things from him. We pray that he and our Lord Jesus the Messiah himself will encourage you and make you able to continually do and say every kind of good thing.

Chapter 3

1This is the last part of what I want to say. Our fellow believers, pray for us that many more people will soon hear the message about our Lord Jesus and honor it, just as you have done. **2**Pray also for us that God will keep the many evil people from harming us. As you know, most people are not faithful to the Lord.

3Nevertheless, the Lord Jesus is faithful to you! He will make you strong spiritually and he will protect you from Satan, the evil one. **4**Because you are joined to our Lord Jesus, we are also confident that you are now obeying what we have commanded you, and that you will obey what we are commanding you {in this letter}. **5**We pray that our Lord Jesus would continue to help you to experience how much God loves you as well as to experience the endurance that the Messiah will give you.

6Our fellow believers, accept what we say now as if our Lord Jesus the Messiah himself were saying this: we command you to stop associating with every fellow believer who is lazy and refuses to work. These people are not living in the way that Jesus taught us and that we in turn have taught you. **7**We tell you this because you yourselves know that you should behave just as we behaved. We did not just sit there without working while we were living among you. **8**That is to say, we did not eat anyone's food if we did not pay for it. Instead, we worked very hard all the time {to support ourselves}. We did that so that we would not have to depend on any of you {for what we needed}. **9**God has certainly authorized us to receive what we need from his people. But instead of demanding things from you, we worked hard so that you could see how God wants his people to live, and then you could live in just the same way. **10**Remember that when we were there with you, we kept commanding you that if any fellow believer refuses to work, you should not give him food to eat. **11**Now we tell you this again, because people have told us that some of you are lazy and not working at all. Not only that, but some of you are interfering with what other people are doing.

12Accept what we say now as if the Lord Jesus the Messiah himself were saying this: We command and urge those fellow believers who are not working to mind their own business and to work so that they have what they need to live.

13As for you fellow believers who are working hard, do not ever get tired of doing what is right!

14If any fellow believer does not obey what we have written in this letter, publicly identify that person. Then do not associate with him, in order that he may become ashamed {that he is not working}. **15**Do not think of him as though he were your enemy; instead, warn him as you would warn your other fellow believers.

16I pray that our Lord, who is the only one who can truly make anyone peaceful, will make you peaceful in every way and in all situations.

I pray that our Lord Jesus will continue to help you all. **17**{Now I have taken the pen from my scribe, and} I, Paul, am sending this greeting to you as I write this myself. I do this in all my letters in order that you may know that it is truly I who have sent this letter. This is how I always end my letters. **18**I pray that our Lord Jesus the Messiah will continue to act kindly to you all.

1 Timothy

Chapter 1

1{I,} Paul, {write this letter to you.} God is the one who rescues us, and the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, is the one whom we confidently expect. The two of them ordered me to represent Jesus the Messiah.

2{I send this letter} to you, Timothy.

You have become like my own son because we both trust in {Jesus}. {May} God the Father and Jesus the Messiah, our Lord, {continue to be} kind and merciful to you and {make you} peaceful.

3As I asked you when I was traveling to the province of Macedonia, {I ask you again} to stay in the city of Ephesus. That way, you can prohibit certain people there from teaching things that are different {from what is true}. **4**{I want you to tell them} to stop focusing on legends and very long lists of ancestors. Those things cause people to argue with each other. They do not help to accomplish God's plan. That happens when we trust in {Jesus}. **5**I want you to require those things so that people will love {each other}. {They will do that} while they desire only what is good, while they know that they are doing what is right, and while they genuinely trust in {Jesus}. **6**However, some people have failed to do those things. Instead, they speak about things that do not matter. **7**Those people desire to be people who teach the {Jewish} law. However, they do not understand what they talk about or what they confidently affirm.

8We {believers} understand that the {Jewish} law is excellent as long as people use it properly. **9**Indeed, we {believers} realize that God did not establish the {Jewish} law for people who do what is right. Rather, {he established the Jewish law} for people who do what is wrong and do not obey anyone. They do not honor God, and they sin. They do things that defile themselves, and they do not set themselves apart for God. They murder their parents. They murder other people. **10**They act in sexually improper ways. They have sex with people of the same gender. They sell other people as slaves. They lie even when they solemnly promise to say what is true. When people teach them what is right, they always do the opposite. **11**{When people teach what is right,} it fits with the good news, which shows how great is the God whom we praise. That is the good news that God has told me {to proclaim to people}.

12I thank Jesus the Messiah, our Lord, who has enabled me {to proclaim the good news}. {I thank him} because he decided that he could trust me, so he appointed me to serve {him}. **13**{Jesus did that} even though I used to insult him, harm his people, and act violently. However, I did not understand what I was doing when I did not trust in {Jesus}. So, Jesus acted mercifully to me. **14**Our Lord {Jesus} acted extremely kindly to me. By uniting me to himself, Jesus the Messiah, he enabled me to believe in him and to love people.

15Everyone should trust and rely on this statement: "Jesus the Messiah was here on earth to rescue sinful people." {As for me,} I am more sinful than everyone else. **16**However, that is why Jesus acted mercifully to me. That way, Jesus the Messiah could show how very patient he is by how he treated me, the most sinful person. He wanted to illustrate {his character} for people who are going to trust in him so that they live with God forever. **17**God is always ruling. He will never die, and no one can see him. There are no other gods. So, let us praise and glorify him forever! May it be so!

18Timothy, you are like my son. I have told you to do certain things because they fit with what people previously prophesied about you. {I have told you to do those things} so that, as those people prophesied, you will serve God well, as a soldier obeys a commanding officer. **19**{You can do that} by trusting in {Jesus} and by knowing that you are doing what is right. Some people have stopped doing that, and now they no longer trust in {Jesus}. **20**Among

those who have done that are Hymenaeus and Alexander. I have expelled them so that Satan rules over them. That way, they will learn not to insult God.

Chapter 2

1So then, I ask {believers} to focus especially on praying for all people. {Believers} should be thankful for these people and ask God to act kindly to them. **2**{They should pray particularly} for kings and for everyone who rules {over other people}. That way, we {believers} can live calmly and peacefully, and we can honor God and act in ways that others respect. **3**It is right {to pray like that}, and it pleases God. He is the one who rescues us. **4**God wants to rescue all people. He wants everyone to understand what is true. **5**{You can tell that God wants those things to happen} because God is the only God. Further, Jesus the Messiah is the only one who reconciles God and humans. He is human himself. **6**He chose to die so that he could free all people {from their sins}. That is what believers testify to during this time when it is right to do so. **7**It was to testify in that way that Jesus appointed me to speak for him and to represent him. {Jesus also appointed me} to instruct non-Jewish people about what is true and about what to believe. As surely as God has united me to the Messiah, I am not telling you what is false, but what is true!

8Next, wherever {you worship God}, here is how I desire men to pray: They should not be angry or quarreling {with each other}. Instead, they should pray in a way that honors God. **9**Similarly, {when you worship God, here is how I desire} women to dress: They should be modest and control themselves by wearing appropriate clothing. They should not wear elaborate hairstyles, golden {jewelry}, pearls, or clothes that cost much money. **10**Instead, {they should focus on} doing what is right. That is appropriate for women who claim to honor God.

11Women should learn unobtrusively. They should always honor and obey {the people who lead their group of believers}. **12**Further, I do not allow women to teach or to rule men. Instead, they should behave unobtrusively. **13**{What you can read in the Scriptures supports what I have commanded,} since God made {the first man} Adam before {he made the first woman} Eve. **14**Further, the talking snake did not convince Adam to do what was wrong. Rather, the talking snake convinced the woman, Eve, to do what was wrong. So, she disobeyed what God had commanded. **15**However, God would eventually rescue Eve {by sending the Messiah} through women having children. {Along with her, God will save other women} as long as they continue to trust in {Jesus}, love other people, act as those who belong to God, and control themselves.

Chapter 3

1Everyone should trust this statement: “People who want to lead the rest of God’s people are seeking to do something that is good.” **2**Because {doing that is good}, those who lead the rest of God’s people must be those whom no one can rightly accuse of doing anything wrong. They must be sexually faithful to their wives. They must not do everything that they desire. They must control themselves. They must act in appropriate ways. They must welcome guests into their homes. They must be good at teaching others. **3**They must not be alcoholics. They must not like to fight and argue. Rather, they must treat others kindly. They must avoid fighting. They must not desire to have more money. **4**They must direct their own families rightly. Their children must honor and obey them and always act in ways that others respect. **5**After all, people who cannot direct their own families will not be able to care properly for any group of believers belonging to God. **6**They must not have only recently trusted in {Jesus}. Otherwise, they might become prideful. Then, God would punish them as he punished Satan. **7**Further, those who lead the rest of God’s people must be those about whom nonbelievers say good things. That way, people do not insult them and Satan will not be able to control them.

8Similarly, those who serve the rest of God’s people must be those whom others respect. They must consistently speak what is true. They must not drink too much alcohol. They must not want more than they need. **9**They should know that they are doing what is right as they remain faithful to what God has revealed, which is the good news

that we trust. **10**Further, the group of believers must also evaluate how they behave. After that, as long as they consistently do what is right, they can serve the rest of God's people.

11Similarly, the women {who serve the rest of God's people} must be those whom others respect. They must not say mean or false things about other people. They must not do everything that they desire. They must always act faithfully.

12The {men} who serve the rest of God's people must be sexually faithful to their wives. They must direct their own families, especially their children, rightly. **13**{They should act in all those ways} because those who serve the rest of God's people rightly will be people whom other believers honor. Also, they will very boldly trust in Jesus the Messiah.

14I plan to visit you soon. However, I am sending this letter to you now. **15**That way, even if I cannot visit you soon, you will understand how people who are like God's own family should act. I am speaking about the group of all believers who belong to the only real God. {These believers} preserve and testify to what is true. **16**Everyone must agree that what God has revealed that enables us to honor him is marvelous:

"People saw the Messiah as a human.

The Holy Spirit declared that he was who he claimed to be.

Angels saw him.

Believers proclaimed who he was to non-Jewish people.

People in many places trusted in him.

God brought him up {into heaven} in a glorious way."

Chapter 4

1The Holy Spirit has declared clearly that some people will stop believing in {Jesus} when this time period is about to end. Instead, they will focus on evil spirits who convince people to believe what is wrong. They will focus on what demons teach. **2**{They focus on those things} because they listen to people who pretend to teach what is true but who actually teach what is false. These teachers refuse to accept that what they are doing is wrong. **3**They command people not to marry others. {They command people} not to eat certain kinds of food. However, God made those foods so that people would thank him for them and eat them. {He made those foods} for people who trust in {Jesus} and who understand what is true. **4**{I say that} because everything that God made is good. People can eat any {kind of food} as long as they thank God for it. **5**{That is} because what God has said and what people pray makes the food holy.

6When you instruct your fellow believers about those things, you will be serving Jesus the Messiah well. You will become spiritually stronger because of the good news that you have believed, which includes the correct teachings that you have accepted. **7**You should refuse to listen to silly legends that have nothing to do with God. Instead, you should work hard to honor God. **8**Here is what I mean: working hard to make your body stronger is helpful for a little while. However, working hard to honor God is helpful at all times. When you do that, you can confidently expect to live {with God} both now and also when God makes you alive again. **9**Everyone should trust and rely on this statement, **10**since it is why we work so hard: "We confidently expect that the only real God {will do what he has promised}. He is the one who rescues all people, but particularly those who trust in {Jesus}."

11Instruct people about {what I have told you}. Require them to do those things. **12**Do not allow anyone to consider you to be unimportant because you are young. Instead, show other believers how to live. Show them that by how you speak, how you behave, how you love others, how you trust in {Jesus}, and how you avoid what is evil. **13**While I am not with you, be sure to continue reading {the Scriptures to the believers when you meet together}, instructing

{the believers}, and urging {them to do what is right}. **14**Be sure to do what God has graciously enabled you to do. God enabled you to do that when someone spoke to you for God and the leaders of the group of believers touched you.

15Consistently do what I have told you {to do}! Focus on those things. That way, everyone will notice that you are {serving Jesus} better. **16**Make sure that you {behave properly} and that what you teach {is right}. As long as you do what I have told you {to do}, you will rescue yourself and anyone who listens to you. So, keep doing what I have told you {to do}.

Chapter 5

1Do not scold a man who is older than you are. Instead, speak to him as if he were your father. Speak to men who are younger than you are as if they were your brothers. **2**Speak to women who are older than you are as if each one were your mother. Speak to women who are younger than you are as if they were your sisters. {When you do that,} avoid everything that might be improper.

3As for women whose husbands have died, treat them respectfully {by taking care of them}. {I am speaking of} women who have no close relatives and whose husbands have died. **4**However, suppose that women whose husbands have died have children or grandchildren. In that case, those children or grandchildren should, most importantly, practice honoring their own family members {by taking care of them}. {In that way,} they will do for their parents and grandparents what their parents and grandparents did for them. That pleases God. **5**Women who have no close relatives and whose husbands have died confidently expect that God {will help them}. They persistently pray {to God} all day long. **6**On the other hand, some women whose husbands have died do whatever they want to do. These women are like dead people even though they are alive. **7**Require {the believers there} to do what I have just written. That way, no one can rightly accuse them of doing anything wrong. **8**Suppose that believers do not take care of their relatives, particularly their close family members. Those people show that they do not really trust in {Jesus}. They have sinned more than people who never trusted in {Jesus}.

9When you add a woman whose husband has died to the list {of women that the group of believers will take care of}, here is what she must be like. She must be at least 60 years old. She must have been sexually faithful to her husband. **10**People must say that she does what is right. For example, she might have brought up children. She might have welcomed people from a different place. She might have cleaned the dirty feet of God's people. She might have helped people who were suffering. In general, she must have persisted in always doing what is good.

11However, do not add women whose husbands have died and who are still young {to the list of women that the group of believers will take care of}. These women may choose to do whatever they want instead of doing what the Messiah wants. {So that they can do whatever they want,} they will desire to marry {even an unbeliever}. **12**So, they have ceased to trust in {Jesus} as they used to do. Therefore, God will punish them. **13**In addition to that, these women may also practice avoiding work. Instead, they may visit one person's home after another. In addition to avoiding work, they may also talk too much and interfere with what others are doing. They may talk about things that they should not talk about. **14**Because of all that, I recommend that women {whose husbands have died and} who are still young should marry again. They should have children. They should direct their own families. They should act in such a way that Satan cannot insult any believers. **15**{I have written those things} because some {women whose husbands have died and who are still young} are already doing what Satan wants {instead of what God wants}.

16Suppose that a woman who trusts in {Jesus} has in her family some women whose husbands have died. She should be the one who helps them. That way, the group of believers will not have to provide for too many women whose husbands have died. Then, the group of believers will be able to help women who have no close relatives and whose husbands have died.

17The leaders who rightly direct {believers} deserve to have those believers respect them and take care of them. The leaders who work hard to proclaim {the good news} and instruct others about it particularly deserve that.

18{You know that this is right} because {Moses wrote} in the Scriptures: “You should not keep an ox from eating the grain when it is helping you separate grain from chaff.” Further, {Jesus said,} “Workers deserve to have people pay them for their work.” **19**When someone claims that a leader has done something wrong, you should only listen if {at least} two or three people say the same thing about that leader. **20**When any leaders have sinned, you should confront them {with what they have done} in front of everyone. That way, the other leaders will be afraid {to sin} too. **21**God, Jesus the Messiah, and the angels whom God has selected are listening right now {and agreeing with me} as I command you to do what I have instructed you to do. {You should do those things} fairly, without favoring one person over another.

22You should not too quickly touch people {to appoint them as leaders}. When they sin, you should not approve of it. You should avoid what is evil.

23You should not drink only water. Instead, you should have a small amount of wine. It will make your stomach feel better and reduce how often you are sick.

24When some people sin, everyone knows about it before God punishes them. However, when other people sin, everyone knows about it only after {God punishes them}. **25**In the same way, when people do what is right, everyone knows about it. Even when people do not seem to know about it, eventually everyone will know about it.

Chapter 6

1All {believers} who are slaves should treat their masters as people whom they should respect in every way. That way, no one will insult God or what we teach. **2**{Some believers who are} slaves have masters who trust in {Jesus}. Those slaves should not disrespect their masters because they are fellow believers. Instead, since the masters for whom they do what is good are people who trust in {Jesus} and whom God loves, those slaves should work for their masters. Instruct people about those things and tell them to do them.

3Some people teach things that are different {from what is true}. They do not accept the right message that comes from our Lord Jesus the Messiah. They do not accept what we teach that enables people to honor God. **4**These people are prideful. They know very little, but they obsess over resolving controversial issues and debating what words mean. When people act in that way, they become jealous of others. They fight with each other. They insult each other. They act in evil ways by suspecting others. **5**They frequently irritate each other. These are people who can no longer think properly. They cannot learn what is true. They think that honoring God is a good way to acquire money.

6However, we do acquire something valuable when we honor God while we are grateful for whatever we have. **7**{We should focus on acquiring things besides money} because we owned nothing when our mothers gave birth to us. Indeed, we will no longer own anything when we die. **8**So, we should be content as long as we can eat and have clothes to wear. **9**As for people who desire to become wealthy, they often think about sinning. They cannot stop what they are doing. The things that they want are senseless and bad for them, and they will eventually destroy these people. **10**{That is} because people do all sorts of evil things when they strongly desire to have money. When some people started desiring money, they stopped trusting in {Jesus}. By doing that, they have made themselves sorrowful in many ways.

11However, you are a man who serves God. You must avoid those {evil} things. Instead, you should always try to do what is right. You should honor God. You should trust in {Jesus}. You should love {others}. You should persevere {when difficult things happen to you}. You should be gentle {with people}. **12**You should persist in trusting in {Jesus} just as soldiers battle their enemies. You should make sure that you will live with God forever. God chose you for that. Also, that is why you claimed that you trusted in Jesus while many people listened to you. **13**God is the one who enables everything that exists to live. Jesus the Messiah is the one who declared what was true when he was on trial before Pontius Pilate. They authorize what I am about to tell you to do. **14**You must obey what God has commanded. You should obey completely. No one should be able to rightly accuse you of doing anything wrong.

Continue to obey until our Lord Jesus the Messiah returns {to this world}. **15**God will cause Jesus to return at the right time. We praise God! There are no rulers more powerful than he is. He is king over all other kings. He is lord over all other lords. **16**God is the only one who can never die. His place {in heaven} is so bright that no one can go near it! No human has looked at him, and no human can look at him. Let us praise him and acknowledge that he is powerful forever! May it be so!

17You should tell believers who are wealthy right now that they should not think too highly of themselves. They should not trust in all the things that they have, because they cannot be certain how long they will have them. Instead, they should trust in God. He is the one who abundantly gives us everything that we have so that we can enjoy it. **18**{Tell those wealthy believers that} they should do very many good things. They should be ready to give away {what they have}. **19**{If they do those things,} they will establish the good things that they will have when God renews this world. {When they do those things,} they make sure that they will truly live {with God}.

20Timothy, carefully preserve the true message that God has given to you. Refuse to listen when people say things that mean nothing and that have nothing to do with God. Do not pay attention when people argue against the good news, using what they claim is true. It is not really true. **21**The people who claim those things have failed to persist in trusting in {Jesus}.

{I pray that God will} be kind to you all.

2 Timothy

Chapter 1

1{I,} Paul, {write this letter to you.} God chose to send me to represent Jesus the Messiah. So, I tell others that God has promised that people whom he has united to Jesus the Messiah will live {with God forever}.

2{I send this letter} to you, Timothy. I love you as if you were my own son.

{May} God the Father and Jesus the Messiah, our Lord, {continue to be} kind and merciful to you and {make you} peaceful.

3I worship God just as my parents and grandparents did, and I know that I am doing what is right. I thank God when I pray for you, which I do very frequently. **4**I think about how you cried {when I left you}, and I desire to be with you again. Then I will rejoice greatly. **5**I also think about how you truly trust {in Jesus}. Your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice first trusted in him. I know that you also trust in him like they do!

6Because you truly trust in {Jesus}, I urge you to continue to eagerly do what God has graciously enabled you to do. God enabled you to do that when I touched you {to authorize you}. **7**{You should eagerly do that} because God did not cause us to be afraid. Instead, he enabled us to serve him powerfully, to love others, and to control ourselves. **8**Because of that, do not think that telling people about our Lord {Jesus} disgraces you. Do not think that I, who am in jail because of him, disgrace you. Instead, you should be willing to let bad things happen to you, as they have happened to me, so that {you can proclaim} the good news. God will enable you {to endure those bad things}. **9**He is the one who rescued us and chose us to be people whom he sets apart for himself. He did not do those things because of what we had done. Rather, he did those things because he wanted to and because he decided to act kindly toward us. Before the world began, he prepared to act kindly toward us when he would unite us to Jesus the Messiah. **10**Now is the time when we can experience how God acts kindly toward us. That happens because Jesus the Messiah, the one who rescues us, came {to this world}. He has made it so that, when people die, they do not have to always be dead. He has given us the good news, which shows us how we can live {with God forever} and never die. **11**For the sake of that good news, God commissioned me to speak for him, to represent Jesus, and to instruct people. **12**Because {God commissioned me to do those things}, bad things are happening to me. However, I do not think that experiencing those bad things disgraces me. That is because I understand who God is. He is the one in whom I have trusted. I am sure that he will preserve what I have given to him until Jesus returns to this world.

13You should maintain the basic parts of the right message that you learned from me. {As you do that,} you should trust in {Jesus} and love others. {You can do those things} because God unites you to Jesus the Messiah. **14**You should carefully preserve the true message that God has given to you. The Holy Spirit who empowers us will enable you {to do that}.

15You realize that almost all the believers in {the province of} Asia {Minor} have left me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes.

16{I pray that} the Lord {Jesus} will be kind to Onesiphorus and his family. {I pray that} since he often encouraged me. Further, even when people put me in jail, he did not think that I disgraced him. **17**In fact, when he came {here} to {the city of} Rome, he kept looking for me until he located me. **18**{So, I pray that} the Lord {Jesus} will be kind to Onesiphorus when the Lord Jesus returns to this world. Additionally, you realize how much Onesiphorus helped {me when we were} in {the city of} Ephesus.

Chapter 2

[1]As for you, {Timothy,} you are like my own son. Allow God to make you {spiritually} stronger as he acts kindly toward you. {He acts kindly toward you} because he has united you to Jesus the Messiah. [2]You have listened to the things that I teach, and many people have confirmed them to you. You must teach other people those same things. Those people must be trustworthy and good at teaching even more people. [3]You should be willing to let bad things happen to you, as they have happened to me, when you obey Jesus the Messiah. Then, you will be like a good soldier{, who obeys his commander even if bad things happen to him}. [4]{Consider this:} soldiers focus on doing what their commanders want. Because of that, they do not participate in what civilians normally do. [5]{Consider this} too: when an athlete disobeys the rules, the referee does not name that athlete the winner. [6]{Finally, consider this:} people who labor to grow crops should be the first people to receive some of what they grow. [7]Consider {the three examples} that I have just written to you. The Lord {Jesus} will enable you to learn completely what they mean.

[8]Focus on Jesus the Messiah, whom God made alive again. He is a descendant of King David. That is the good news that I proclaim. [9]Because I proclaim that good news, bad things happen to me. In fact, I am now in jail, as if I had done something wrong. However, no one can prevent people from hearing the message from God. [10]Because that is true, for the sake of those whom God has chosen, I always persevere {when bad things happen to me}. That way, God will rescue them, like me, by uniting them to Jesus the Messiah, and they will be glorious forever.

[11]Everyone should trust this statement:

“It is as if we died with Jesus when he died.

So then, we will also live {forever} with him.

[12]Suppose that we persevere {when bad things happen to us}.

Then we will also rule {over everything} with him.

Suppose that we say that we do not know him.

Then he also will say that he does not know us.

[13]Suppose that we stop being loyal {to Jesus}.

Then he continues to be loyal {to us}.

That is because he always acts based on who he is.”

[14]Teach those things again {to the believers who are with you}. God is listening {and agreeing with you} as you command them not to debate about what words mean. Debating like that does not help anybody. Further, it harms the people who listen to it. [15]Eagerly desire to be a person whom God considers to be acceptable to him. {To do that,} you should serve God by properly explaining the true message. Then, nothing can disgrace you. [16]Do not listen when people say things that mean nothing and that have nothing to do with God. Those people dishonor God more and more. [17]Further, what they say will spread as an infectious disease does. Hymenaeus and Philetus are examples of such people. [18]These two men have failed to believe and teach what is true. Instead, they claim that God has already made everyone alive again. In this way, they cause some people to stop trusting in {Jesus}. [19]Despite that, God preserves his people. They are like a building that has a solid foundation, which God has guaranteed with two statements. {Here is the first statement:} “The Lord {Jesus} realizes which people belong to him.” {Here is the second statement:} “Everyone who claims to serve the Lord {Jesus} must stop doing what is wrong.”

[20]Consider this example: a wealthy person’s house contains utensils that someone made out of {valuable materials like} gold and silver. {Such a house} also contains utensils that someone made out of {less valuable materials like}

wood and clay. People use the valuable utensils to perform dignified tasks. In contrast, they use the less valuable utensils to perform undignified tasks. **21**So then, suppose that some people avoid doing what is evil. Those people will be like the utensils that people use to perform dignified tasks. God will set them apart for himself. They will serve God well. God will enable them to do everything that is right.

22You must avoid desiring the wrong things that young people usually desire. Instead, you should always try to do what is right. You should trust in {Jesus}. You should love {others}. You should live peacefully {with others.} {You should do those things} along with people who desire what is good and who worship the Lord {Jesus}. **23**Refuse to discuss controversial issues that uninformed and unwise people care about. You realize that discussing those issues makes people quarrel with each other. **24**People who serve the Lord {Jesus} must not quarrel. Instead, they must be kind to all people. They must be good at teaching others. They must endure when bad things happen to them. **25**They should gently instruct the people who argue against them. Then God may enable those people to stop believing what is wrong and instead understand what is true. **26**Previously, Satan was able to control them so that they did what he wanted. {However, after you instruct them,} Satan may no longer be able to control them, and they may be able to think clearly again.

Chapter 3

1You need to understand that the final time period {before Jesus returns to this world} will be very dangerous {for believers}. **2**{It will be dangerous} because people will care about themselves {more than they care about anyone else}. They will strongly desire to have money. They will say great things about themselves. They will think too highly of themselves. They will insult {God and others}. They will fail to do what their parents require. They will not thank {anyone for anything}. They will not honor God. **3**They will fail to care {for others}. They will refuse to forgive {anyone}. They will say bad things {about others}. They will fail to control themselves. They will act in brutal ways. They will hate everything that is good. **4**They will betray {others}. They will act without thinking first. They will be prideful. They will care about whatever makes them feel good instead of loving God. **5**They will appear to honor God, but they will refuse to actually do so. Stay away from such people.

6Further, some of those people convince others to invite them to their homes. {While they are there}, they start to control what any spiritually immature women {who live there} think. These are women who have sinned very often. They do all the many things that they want to do. **7**They keep learning new things, but they can never understand what is true. **8**{You know} how Jannes and Jambres{, Pharaoh's magicians,} tried to stop Moses {from freeing the Israelites}. Much like that, the {false teachers I am speaking about} try to stop others from learning what is true. These false teachers are people who can no longer think properly. When they claim to believe in {Jesus}, God does not approve of them. **9**However, they will not be able to convince many more people. {That is} because everyone will realize that they are foolish. That is just what happened to Pharaoh's magicians.

10In contrast, as for you, you know what I do, and you imitate me. I teach {others}. I live {to please God}. I focus on what {God has called me} to do. I trust in {Jesus}. I do not easily become angry. I love {others}. I persevere {when bad things happen to me}. **11**People hurt me. I experience painful things. I experienced those kinds of painful things when I was in {the cities of} Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. Even when people hurt me in those ways, I persisted {in serving God}. When any of those bad things happened to me, the Lord {Jesus} delivered me. **12**Indeed, people will hurt all men and women who desire to live in a way that honors God as God unites them to Jesus the Messiah. **13**On the other hand, people who do what is wrong and people who try to trick others will become more and more evil. They will deceive others, and people will deceive them. **14**In contrast, as for you, you realize who taught you what you have learned and what you are sure about. So, you should persist in {believing} those things. **15**Further, {you should persist in believing those things because you realize} that you have heard what God says in the Scriptures from the time when you were a young child. The Scriptures enable you to think wisely. That way, when you trust in Jesus the Messiah, God rescues you.

16All the Scriptures come from God's Spirit. They are useful for teaching people. {They are useful} for telling people that they have done what is wrong. {They are useful} for telling people what is actually true. {They are useful} for

instructing people in how to do what is right. [17]As a result, people who serve God have everything that they need. They are ready to do everything that is right.

Chapter 4

[1]God and Jesus the Messiah are listening right now {and agreeing with me} as I command you {to do what I am about to tell you}. {Remember that} Jesus will soon decide whether everyone who is alive and everyone who has died is guilty or innocent. {You should focus on what I am about to command you} as much as you expect Jesus to return {to this world} and to rule over everything. [2]{Here is what I want you to do}: you must proclaim the good news. Be ready to do that when it is a good time to do so and also when it is not a good time to do so. When people have done what is wrong, confront them. Warn them {not to sin}. Encourage them {to do what is right}. {As you do all those things,} never become angry quickly, and always instruct people. [3]{I tell you to do those things} because later on people will refuse to listen when others teach them what is right. Rather, they will do what they want by collecting many instructors. They will be eager to listen to what pleases them. [4]They will stop listening to what is true. Instead, they will focus on legends. [5]In contrast, as for you, you must control yourself at all times. You must {be willing to} allow bad things to happen to you. You must do what you have to do in order to proclaim the good news. You must complete everything you must do to serve {Jesus}.

[6]{I tell you to do those things} because I will soon die. God is even now treating me as if I were wine that someone was pouring out to honor him. [7]I am like a soldier who has battled his enemies. I am like a runner who has finished his race. {I mean that} I have persisted in trusting in {Jesus}. [8]I can now expect the reward for doing what is right, which God has ready for me. The Lord {Jesus}, who always evaluates people justly, will give me that reward when he returns {to this world}. However, I will not be the only one whom he rewards. Rather, he will reward everyone who rejoices when he returns {to this world}.

[9]Please try to visit me {here} soon. [10]{I ask you to do that} because Demas has abandoned me since he cares {too much} about living in this present world. He has left for {the city of} Thessalonica. Crescens {has left} for {the province of} Galatia. Titus {has left} for {the province of} Dalmatia. [11]Luke is the only one who is still {here} with me. When you visit, bring Mark with you. {I ask for him} because he serves {others} with me well. [12]As for Tychicus, I told him to go to {the city of} Ephesus. [13]I left an outer garment with Carpus in {the city of} Troas. Please bring it with you when you visit me. Also{, please bring with you} my books, particularly the ones with leather pages.

[14]Alexander, who makes things out of metal, did many bad things to me. The Lord {Jesus} will punish him for what he has done. [15]He tried very hard to keep us from proclaiming the good news. So, you too need to watch out for him.

[16]The first time I defended myself {in court}, no believers came to support me. Instead, they all abandoned me. I pray that God will forgive them for that. [17]However, the Lord {Jesus} supported me and made me strong. That way, I could complete proclaiming {the good news}, and many non-Jews could listen to it. Also, God delivered me from people who would have killed me. [18]{I am sure that} the Lord {Jesus} will deliver me whenever people do anything bad to me. He will rescue me so that I can participate in his kingdom, which is in heaven. Let us honor him forever! May it be so!

[19]Say hello for me to Prisca, Aquila, and Onesiphorus and his family. [20]Erastus stayed in {the city of} Corinth. As for Trophimus, he stayed behind in {the city of} Miletus because he was ill. [21]Please try to visit {me here} before the winter season. Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and {the rest of} the fellow believers {here} say hello to you.

[22]{I pray that} the Lord {Jesus} will be with you{, Timothy}. {I pray that God will} be kind to you all.

Titus

Chapter 1

1I, Paul, {write this letter to you, Titus. I} am a servant of God and a representative of Jesus the Messiah. God sent me to teach the people whom he has chosen as his own to trust him more. I work to help his people to know what is true, so that they can live in a way that pleases God. **2**His people can learn how to live like this because they are confident that God will cause them to live forever. Even before the world began, God promised to cause us to live forever, and God does not lie. **3**Then, in God's own timing, he communicated his plan through this message that he trusted me to preach. I do this in order to obey the command of God, who saves us. **4**Titus, you have become like a real son to me because we both now believe in Jesus the Messiah. May God the Father and the Messiah Jesus who saves us continue to be kind to you and keep you peaceful.

5I left you on the Island of Crete for this reason: that you do the work that is still unfinished and also appoint elders {for the group of believers} in every city, just as I told you to do. **6**Now every elder must be someone whom no one can criticize. He must also have just one wife, his children must trust in God, and people must not consider his children to be out of control or disobedient. **7**Everyone who leads God's people is like the person who manages the servants and property of someone else, but he is doing this for God. So it is necessary for this person to have a good reputation. He must not be proud and he must not get angry quickly. He must not be an alcoholic, not someone who likes to fight and argue, and not a greedy man. **8**Rather than that, he must welcome strangers and love the things that are good. He must always act sensibly and treat other people in a fair and honest manner. He must always act in a way that is right for someone who is devoted to God and he must always control his emotions. **9**He must always believe the true things that we have taught him, and he must live according to them. He must do this so that he can persuade people to live like this too, and so that he can correct people if they do not want to live like this.

10I tell you these things because there are many people who refuse to obey those who are in authority over them. What these people say has no value. They persuade people to believe wrong things. The people who are the most like this are the ones who tell all followers of the Messiah to become circumcised. **11**You and the leaders whom you appoint must prevent such people from teaching the believers. They are teaching things that they should not teach, causing entire families to believe wrong things. They only do it so that people will give them money. This is very shameful! **12**One man of Crete, someone his people thought was a prophet, said, "Cretans frequently lie to each other! They are like dangerous wild animals! They are lazy and always eat too much food." **13**What he said is true, so correct them forcefully so that they may believe and teach correct things about God. **14**In order to believe correct things about God, they must stop living according to stories invented by the Jews and commandments that did not come from God. These commandments came from people who have stopped obeying what is true. **15**If some people only want to do or think about doing good things, then everything that they do is good. But if people are wicked and do not believe in the Messiah Jesus, everything that they do is bad. Such people's way of thinking has been ruined. They do not even feel guilty when they do what is evil. **16**Even though they claim to know God, what they do shows that they do not know him. They are disgusting. They disobey God and can do nothing good for him.

Chapter 2

1But as for you, Titus, teach people the things that agree with what you know is true about God. **2**Tell the older men that they must control themselves at all times, that they must live in a way that other people respect, and that they must act sensibly. Tell them that they must also firmly believe the true things about God, love others truly, and do all these things even when it is difficult. **3**Tell the older women, like the men, to live so that everyone knows that

they respect God very much. Tell them that they must not say mean or false things about other people, and that they must not be addicted to drinking a lot of wine. Instead, they should teach others what is good. **4**In this way, they will be able to instruct the younger women to love their own husbands and children. **5**The older women should also teach the younger women to control what they say and do, not to act in a wrong way toward any man, to work well at home, and to do what their husbands tell them. They should do all these things so that no one can mock God's message to us. **6**As for the younger men, urge them likewise to control themselves well. **7**You yourself must continually do what is good so that others will see what they should also be doing. When you teach the believers, make sure that everything you say is true and say it in a way that they will respect. **8**Teach people what is right with messages that no one can criticize. Then, if anybody wants to stop you, other people will shame them because they will have nothing bad that they can justly say about any of us. **9**As for those believers who are slaves, teach them that they should always submit to their masters. Tell them to live in a way that pleases their masters in every way, and to not argue with them. **10**They must not steal even little things from their masters; instead, they should be faithful to them, and they should do everything in a way that leads people to admire all that we teach about God, who saves us. **11**The believers should behave in these good ways because God is offering to save everyone as a gift that no one deserves. **12**By means of this free gift, God trains us to stop doing what is wrong and what people of the world want to do. He teaches us to be sensible, to do what is right, and to obey him while we live during this present time. **13**At the same time, God teaches us to wait for what he will certainly do in the future, which is something that will make us very happy: That is, Jesus the Messiah, our Savior and powerful God, will return to us in a glorious way. **14**He gave himself {to die} in our place so that we can be free to live in the way that God wants us to live, and to remove our sin from us so that we can be a special {group of} people who belong only to him, and who eagerly desire to do what is good.

15{Titus,} speak about these things. Urge {the believers to live as I have described} and correct {them when they do what is wrong,} using your right to command {them if necessary}. Make sure that everyone pays attention to what you say.

Chapter 3

1Titus, continue to tell our people again that they should obey the people who rule over them. They need to be ready to be helpful whenever they are able. **2**They should not say disrespectful things about anyone. They should be peaceful. They should treat everyone gently and as more important than themselves. **3**We need to remember that there was a time when we ourselves were foolish and unwilling to obey God. We strongly desired to do things that made us feel good, and so we did those things. But then we discovered that we were unable to stop doing those things. We were constantly envying each other and doing other evil things. We caused people to hate us and we hated each other. **4**But then when God showed us that he was acting generously to save us because he loves us, **5**he saved us by removing our sin from us as though he had washed it away. As he did this, the Holy Spirit made us new and enabled us to start living in a new way for God. He did not save us because we do good things, but he saved us because he is merciful. **6**God generously gave us his Holy Spirit when Jesus the Messiah saved us. **7**When Jesus freely gave himself for us, God declared that everything was made right between him and us. Because Jesus did that, God gave us the Holy Spirit so that we can share in everything that the Lord Jesus has to give us, especially everlasting life with him. **8**This is a statement that everyone can trust. I want you to continually emphasize these things so that those who have believed God may constantly devote themselves to doing those things that are good and that help others. These things are excellent and beneficial for everyone. **9**But many people will want to debate with you about senseless things, such as about lists of Jewish ancestors. They will want to dispute with you about {religious} law and argue with you about many things. Do not engage with them in any of that. Those kinds of things are useless and they do not help you in any way. **10**If someone insists on engaging in these divisive activities after you have warned him one or two times to stop doing it, then have nothing more to do with him, **11**because you know that someone like that has rejected the truth; he is sinning and condemns himself.

12I plan to send Artemas or Tychicus to you. After one of them arrives, come quickly to me at the town of Nicopolis, because I have decided to stay there for the winter. **13**Do everything you can to equip Zenas the law expert and

Apollos for their journey, making sure that they have everything that they need. **14**In the same way, make sure that our people learn to occupy themselves with doing good things for people who need help. By doing this, they will be living in a useful way for God.

15Titus, all those who are with me greet you! Please greet for us everyone there who loves us as fellow believers. May God continue to be kind to all of you.

Philemon

Chapter 1

1{I,} Paul, am currently in prison for serving the Messiah, Jesus. I am here with Timothy, our fellow believer. {I am writing this letter} to {you,} Philemon. You also serve the Messiah, and we love you. **2**{I also write} to Apphia, our fellow believer, and to Archippus, who is {like} a soldier {in the way he serves the Messiah} with us. {I also write} to the group of believers that meets in your house. **3**{I pray that} God our Father and our Lord Jesus the Messiah will continue to be kind to you all and make you peaceful.

4When I pray, I always thank my God for you, {Philemon,} **5**because {people tell me} how much you trust in the Lord Jesus and how much you love him and all of God's people. **6**I also pray that as you trust in the Messiah, just as we trust in him, you will understand even more all the good things the Messiah has given to us for serving him. **7**My dear friend, you have greatly encouraged me and have caused me to rejoice a lot. For you have been encouraging God's people by how much you love them.

8So {because you love God's people,} and because {I am an apostle} of the Messiah, I am completely confident that the Messiah would allow me to command you to do what you should do. **9**But {instead of commanding you,} {because we love each other,} I, Paul, an old man and now also a prisoner because I serve the Messiah, Jesus, only request {that you do this.} **10**I am asking you do something for Onesimus. He has become like a son to me {since I told him about the Messiah here} in prison. **11**He was useless to you in the past, but now he is useful both to you and to me!

12Although he is very dear to me, I am sending him back to you. **13**I wanted to keep him here with me in order that he might serve me in your place, especially while I am still in prison for preaching the good news {about the Messiah.} **14**However, {I am sending him back to you} because you did not tell me I could keep him here. I want you to help me {because you want to help me,} and not because I have forced you to help me. **15**It may be {that God allowed Onesimus} to be apart {from you} during this short time so that he could return to you {as a believer} and be with you eternally. **16**This is because {Onesimus} is no longer just a slave, but he is much more than a slave. For now you can love him as a fellow believer! He is very dear to me, but he is certainly even more dear to you. This is because now he not only belongs to you {as a slave,} but he also belongs to the Lord.

17So if you consider me to be your companion {in doing the work God has given us,} then welcome Onesimus into your home in the same way you would welcome me. **18**But if he has taken anything from you, or if he is in debt to you for anything, I will repay you. **19**I, Paul, am now writing this in my own handwriting: I will repay you whatever he owes you. I am certain that I do not have to remind you that you owe me {even more than Onesimus might owe you,} {because God saved} your life {when I told you about the Messiah.} **20**Yes, my fellow believer, {I am saying what you think I am saying}. I want {you to do this for me} because of what the Lord {did for you}. Give me another reason to be glad that we are both joined to the Messiah.

21As I write {this letter} to you, I am sure that you will do what I am asking you to do. In fact, I know that you will do even more than what I am asking you to do.

22As {you do what I am asking you to do}, I also ask you to prepare to receive me into your home. Because all of you have been praying for me, I confidently expect that {God will allow me to leave prison} and to come to you all.

23Epaphras, who is {suffering} with me in prison {for serving} Messiah Jesus, says hello to you. **24**Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, who are my partners here, {also say hello to you.} **25**{I pray} that our Lord Jesus the Messiah will continue to be kind to you. Amen.

Hebrews

Chapter 1

1In the past, God communicated to the Israelite ancestors through people who proclaimed his message. He did this throughout the time during which the ancestors lived, and he used many different means to do so. **2**{However,} when this final time period {began}, God communicated to us through his own Son. God made the world together with him, and God has chosen him to receive everything. **3**In God's Son, we see how glorious God is. In fact, God's Son perfectly shows what God is like. By speaking powerfully, he sustains everything {that God has made}. After he purified his people from the wrong things that they did, he ascended into heaven and began to rule with God {his Father}. **4**{These things about him mean that} he is much greater than the spiritual beings. In the same way, the name that God now calls him is greater than their {names}.

5{You can tell that God's Son is greater than the spiritual beings} because God did not at any time say these words to any spiritual being:

"On this day, I have declared to everyone that I am your father,

and you are my son!"

{He did not say these words about any spiritual being} either:

"I will be his father,

and he will be my son."

{However, he did say these words to his own Son.}

6More than that, when God raised his Son into the heavenly world, he commanded:

"All the spiritual beings who serve God must honor and praise him."

7God says this about the spiritual beings:

"I have caused the spiritual beings who serve me to be {like} the wind and {like} burning fire."

8On the other hand, {God says this} about his Son:

"You who are God will rule forever,

and you will reign justly over your kingdom.

9You loved whatever is just, and you hated whatever breaks God's law. Because of that, I, your God, have caused you to be more powerful and joyful than anyone else who is with you."

10And {God also says this about his Son:}

"You are the Lord, who powerfully created everything that exists when it all began.

11All those things will eventually fall apart,

but you keep on living forever.

They are like clothing that becomes old and wears out,

12and you will {remove them and} roll them up as if they were old clothes.

In the same way that a person changes clothes, you will change the things that you created.

In contrast, you are the one who stays the same and lives at all times!”

13God did not at any time say these words to any spiritual being:

“Rule with me

while I defeat all of your enemies!”

{However, he did say these words to his own Son.}

14The spiritual beings are all powerful beings who serve God, and God has sent them to help those whom he will soon save.

Chapter 2

1Because {God did say those things to his Son}, we need to focus most of all on {the good news} that we learned. That way, we do not stop believing it. **2**{This is important} because, when the spiritual beings gave the law {to the people of Israel}, what they said was reliable. Further, God justly punished anyone who did not listen to this law or broke it. **3**{Since that is true}, God will certainly punish any one of us who ignores the message about how God has acted powerfully to save us. It was the Lord {Jesus} who first spoke this message, and those who listened to him told us the same message reliably. **4**God also has confirmed to us that this message is true by empowering believers to do powerful and amazing things. Further, he gave the Holy Spirit to believers, to each as God chose.

5Now God has not put the spiritual beings in charge of the heavenly world that he will bring to earth. It is that world about which I am talking. **6**Someone confirmed {what I have said} when he wrote in the Scriptures,

“No humans are worthy enough for you to think about them{, God}!

No human beings are important enough for you to take care of them!

7{Despite that,} you created humans to be only slightly less powerful than the spiritual beings,

and you have greatly honored and empowered them.

8You have put them in charge of everything {that you created}.”

When he wrote, “put them in charge of everything,” that means that there is nothing over which they are not in charge. However, at this present time, we do not observe that humans are in charge of everything. **9**However, we do observe Jesus. He is the one who was less powerful than the spiritual beings for a short time, and God has {now} greatly honored and empowered him. God did this because Jesus died. In this way, God graciously had him die for all people {who believe in him}.

10{Working in that way} was appropriate for God, who created and directs everything {that exists}. When Jesus began to make glorious everyone who believes in him, who are {like} his own siblings, God used how Jesus suffered to make him able to save them. **11**Jesus, who sets his people apart for God, and those same people whom he set apart for God, all come from God himself. So, Jesus does not hesitate to refer to them as his own siblings. **12**{Jesus calls them his siblings} when he says,

“I will declare to my siblings what you are like{, God};

I will praise you when people gather together {to worship you}.”

13{Jesus says} further:

“I will rely on him.”

And {Jesus says} further,

“Look at me and God’s children whom he has entrusted to me.”

14So, because God’s children are human beings, Jesus also became a human being just like them. {He did that} so that he, by dying, could defeat Satan, who uses the fact that people die to control them. **15**{When he did that,} he got rid of the way that dying makes us afraid while we live. **16**{Jesus became a human being,} because he came to help those who belong to Abraham{, the ancestor of the Israelites}, not to help spiritual beings, as you know. **17**Because that {is why he came}, Jesus needed to be exactly like us, who are his siblings. That way, he can be the ruling priest who serves God in a compassionate and trustworthy way, so that God forgives what his people did wrong. **18**{Jesus can be that kind of priest} because he endured painful things and experienced how doing what is wrong seems to be good. So, he can aid everyone who also experiences how doing what is wrong seems to be good.

Chapter 3

1My fellow believers, God has set you apart for himself, and he has summoned us together from heaven. Since {I have told you what Jesus has done,} you should think about him. God sent him to us, and he is the ruling priest in whom we say we believe. **2**He faithfully served God, who made him {a ruling priest}. {He is} like Moses, who also {faithfully served God} as part of God’s people. **3-4**Now each building has a builder who made it, and people rightly praise the builder more than {they praise} the building. Similarly, God is the builder who made everything. Therefore, people should praise Jesus{, who is God,} more than {they praise} Moses{, whom God made}. **5**Moses faithfully served God as one who helped all God’s people. In that way, he already proclaimed what God says now {about Jesus}. **6**But the Messiah is God’s Son, who {faithfully} rules over God’s people. As long as we persist in boldly and proudly expecting {what God will give us}, we belong to those same people.

7Since {we are God’s people}, {we should do} what the Holy Spirit says:

“This day, when you hear the Father speak {to you}, **8**do not stubbornly disobey him. {That is what your ancestors did} when they rebelled against God and provoked him while they lived in the wild places. **9**{While they were} in those places, your ancestors provoked God to see what he would do. {They did that} even though they saw all the amazing things that he did {for them} **10**during a period of 40 years.

So, he was angry with those people, and he said about them, ‘They want to do what is wrong all the time. They do not understand how I want them to behave.’

11So then, because he was angry with them, he solemnly declared, ‘They will never participate in how I rest!’”

12Fellow believers, pay attention! Make sure that none of you think in evil and unbelieving ways that would lead you to become disloyal to the only real God. **13**Rather, you should encourage each other {to be loyal to God} daily, during every day that we call “this day.” That way, none of you sin and thus deceive yourselves, which would make you unable to obey God. **14**{You should encourage each other,} because we share {in everything} with the Messiah. {That is true} as long as we persist in trusting him, from when we began to do so until we die. **15**{You should encourage each other} while the Holy Spirit says,

“This day, when you hear God speak {to you}, do not stubbornly disobey him. {That is what your ancestors did} when they rebelled against God.”

16Now you know that it was all God’s people, whom Moses led out of the land of Egypt, who listened to God speak and still rebelled against him. **17**You know that it was God’s people, who did what was wrong, with whom God was

angry for a period of 40 years. They died in the wild places. **18**You know that it was God's people, who did not obey him, to whom he solemnly declared that they would never participate in how he rests. **19**So, we can tell that they could not participate {in how God rests} because they did not trust {in him}.

Chapter 4

1So, {we can tell that} God still promises that his people will participate in how he rests. Because of that, we need to make sure that every one of you really receives {what God has promised}. **2**{We need to make sure of this,} because we heard the good news just like they did. However, because they were not among those people who believed in what they heard, what they heard did not help them. **3**{That is} because {only} we who believe {in the good news} participate in how God rests, {but those who do not believe do not participate in it}. As the Holy Spirit says, "So then, because he was angry with them, he solemnly declared, 'They will never participate in how I rest!'"

{God said this} even though he stopped working {and rested} after he created the world. **4**{You know that God rested} because of what the Holy Spirit says elsewhere about the seventh {day of the week}. {He says,}

"Then, when {it was} the seventh day {of the week}, God finished working {to create everything}, and he rested."

5But {note} again {what God says about the Israelite ancestors} in the words that I already quoted:

"They will never participate in how I rest!"

6So then, the Israelite ancestors who heard the good news in the past did not obey God, and so they did not participate in how God rests. However, God still wants some people to participate in how he rests. **7**{Because of that,} the Holy Spirit once more picked a time {when we can participate in how God rests}. {That time is} what we call "this day." {He did this} when he spoke through David a long time after {the Israelite ancestors disobeyed}. He said, as I have already quoted,

"This day, when you hear God speak {to you}, do not stubbornly disobey him."

8So, the Holy Spirit refers to a different day {when God's people can participate in how God rests} that comes after the day {when Joshua led the Israelite ancestors into the land that God had promised them}. This means that {when Joshua did that,} he did not help them participate in how God rests. **9**So, as you can see, God's people can still participate in how God rests, {just as people rest on} the Jewish day of rest. **10**In fact, the people who participate in how God rests also finish what they are doing and rest. {They do this} just like God finished {creating everything} and rested. **11**Because of all that, we should focus on participating in how God rests. That way, none {of us} disobeys {God} like the Israelite ancestors did.

12{You need to pay attention to these things,} because what God speaks {is like a person who} lives and does things, including discerning what people think and plan. {It does that as if it were} a sword with two very sharp edges that could cut apart people's bones from their tendons and that could divide up people's inner lives. **13**God knows everything about every person and thing. Nothing that he created can stay secret when he wishes to examine it. He is the one about whom we are talking.

14So, a powerful ruling priest works for us, one who ascended through the heavens. He is Jesus, God's Son. Because of that, we need to persist in believing what we say we believe. **15**Now the ruling priest who works for us can very well understand how weak we are. In fact, he experienced many times how doing what is wrong seems to be good, just like we do. However, he never sinned. **16**So then, we should boldly go closer to God, who rules graciously. That way, he will act mercifully and kindly toward us when we need him to help us.

Chapter 5

1When God appoints a person to be a ruling priest, he selects that person from a group of people in order to serve God for that group. The ruling priest then presents {to God} what people give or sacrifice to take away sins. **2**{Every ruling priest} is weak. Because of that, he can act patiently toward those who do not know much about God and toward those who believe and do what is wrong. **3**Further, because {each ruling priest is weak}, God requires him to present a sacrifice to take away his own sins, just like {he presents sacrifices} to take away {the sins of} the rest of the people {of Israel}. **4**Now people cannot decide to become honorable ruling priests on their own. Rather, God chooses {each person who will be a ruling priest}, just like {he chose} Aaron{, the first ruling priest}.

5Similarly, the Messiah too did not decide to become a glorious ruling priest on his own. Rather, God the Father {chose him to be a ruling priest} when he said to him,

“On this day, I have declared to everyone that I am your father, and you are my son!” **6**Similarly, {as you can read} in another Psalm, God the Father said {to the Messiah}:

“You will never stop being a priest in the same way that Melchizedek was a priest.”

7When the Messiah lived with us before he died and came back to life, he often prayed powerfully and sorrowfully to God. He did this because God could rescue him when he died. Because he honored God, God listened to him {and made him alive again}. **8**Although he is God’s Son, he learned what it means to obey God when bad things happened to him. **9**Then, when God finished making him able to do so, the Son became the one who saves forever every person who does what he requires. **10**{He did that} after God appointed him to be a ruling priest in the same way that Melchizedek was a priest.

11We have many things to talk about with regard to Melchizedek. However, since you do not listen {and understand} well, these things will be difficult to explain {to you}. **12**{You have believed in the Messiah} for long enough that you should be teaching others {about God}. Instead, though, someone still has to teach you simple things about what God says. You are like babies who have to drink milk rather than being like adults who eat food. **13**All people who know very little about what is right {and what is wrong} are like people who drink only milk. In fact, they are like babies. **14**On the other hand, people who know much about God are {like adults who eat} food. These people have consistently practiced how to recognize and then distinguish between what is right and what is wrong.

Chapter 6

1Therefore, we need to learn more so that we become mature. We should not continue to focus on only the most basic things about the Messiah. {In other words,} we do not need to learn again about how to stop doing useless things or about how to trust in God. **2**{We should not} learn {again} about different ways to baptize people, about putting our hands on others {to help them}, about how those who have died will live again, or about how God will finally decide whether people are guilty or innocent. **3**At this time, as long as God wants {us to do so}, we will indeed {learn more so that we become mature}.

4{Let me tell you about something} that cannot happen. {Think about} people who learned about the good news at one time. They experienced what God gives {to his people} from heaven, and they received God’s Spirit. **5**They experienced how good are the things God says, and {they have already begun to experience} the powerful things that God will do when he renews the world. **6**{Think about what would happen} were these people to stop believing the good news. {In that case,} they cannot repent and believe again. {That is because what they did} is like selfishly crucifying and humiliating God’s Son. **7**{Here is an example:} God blesses any field where, once rain falls on it, crops grow that people use. **8**However, when a field produces plants that are useless, it helps nobody, and God will soon curse it. In the end, someone will set fire to it {to burn up all the useless plants}.

9Even though I have warned you in this way, fellow believers whom I love, I am sure that you are believing more firmly {than I have implied}. {In fact, I am sure that} God has saved you. **10**Indeed, since God always acts justly, he will not overlook how you act and how you love {others}. You have proved that you do these things to honor God, particularly when you have helped and continue to help God's people. **11**I greatly desire that you all, until you die, continue to focus diligently on fully trusting {that God will give to you} what you confidently expect. **12**That way, you will not be lazy. Instead, you will do what other believers have done: they have received what God promised them, because they trusted in him and waited patiently.

13When God said that he would do something for Abraham, he guaranteed it himself. {He did that} because every other person who could guarantee it is less powerful {than God}. **14**{Here is what} he promised {to Abraham}: "I will definitely bless you, and I will definitely give you many descendants." **15**Because {God guaranteed what he promised}, and because Abraham persevered in expecting it, God gave him what he had promised, {a son}.

16Now, people have someone who is more powerful than they are guarantee {what they promise}. In fact, when someone guarantees what he or she promises in this way, it definitively concludes whatever people are arguing about. **17**In a similar way, God wanted to demonstrate very clearly to those who would receive what he promised that he would not change what he intended to do. So, he guaranteed what he promised, {just like humans do}. **18**So, God both promised and swore an oath, and he will not lie about or change either of these things. {He did that} for us, who have trusted in him to save us. In this way, he encourages us to persist in confidently expecting what he is ready to give us. **19**When we confidently expect {what God will give us}, it is as if an anchor holds us very securely {so that we do not waver from trusting God}. Further, {when we confidently expect what God will give us}, it is as if we had gone into the inner part of the {heavenly} sanctuary, behind the cloth hanging{, and already received it}. **20**{That is the same place} where Jesus went {to serve God} for us and to open the way for us. {He went there} after he became a ruling priest who will always {serve God}, in the same way that Melchizedek was a priest.

Chapter 7

1{Now I will say more about} Melchizedek. He ruled {the city of} Salem, and he served the greatest God as a priest. When Abraham was going home after defeating some of his enemies, Melchizedek met with him and blessed him. **2**Then Abraham gave to him one tenth of everything {that he took when he defeated his enemies}. {The name "Melchizedek"} means "just king" {in Hebrew}. {The title} "ruler of {the city of} Salem" means "peaceful ruler," {since "Salem" sounds like the Hebrew word for "peaceful"}. **3**{When Moses wrote about Melchizedek, he did not say anything about} his father, his mother, his other ancestors, when he was born, or when he died. So, {Moses} described him as if he were similar to God's Son and as if he always served as a priest.

4You can tell how important Melchizedek was from how Abraham, the ancestor of all the Israelites, offered him one tenth of the most valuable things {that he took when he defeated his enemies}. **5**In Moses' law, {God spoke to} the men who are part of the clan of Levi and who serve as priests. He commanded them to receive one tenth of what the rest of the Israelites, who are their relatives, {earned or grew}. {God commanded this} despite the fact that all the Israelites are descendants of Abraham. **6**Now Melchizedek is not part of the clan of Levi. Despite that, he received one tenth of what Abraham {took when he defeated his enemies}. Further, he blessed Abraham, the man to whom God had promised {that he would give him many descendants}. **7**Now everyone agrees that more important people bless less important people. {So, because he blessed Abraham, Melchizedek is more important than Abraham.} **8**In Moses' law, we learn about how priests receive one tenth {of what the rest of the Israelites earn or grow}, but these priests all die. In the story about Melchizedek, we learn that he {also received one tenth of what Abraham took from his enemies}, but he continues to live. **9**In fact, in a way, Levi {and the priests from his clan} gave one tenth {of what they had to Melchizedek} when Abraham {gave him one tenth}. {This is true even though} they are the ones who receive one tenth {from what the Israelites have}. **10**{What I have said makes sense} because Levi {had not yet been born} and was{, in a way,} still inside Abraham, his great-grandfather, when he and Melchizedek met together.

11Now God made the law that he gave to the Israelites depend on having the descendants of Levi serve as priests. So, suppose that people could become what God wanted them to be through what these priests did to serve God. {In that case,} God would never have appointed another priest to serve in the way that Melchizedek was a priest instead of in the way that Aaron was a priest. {However, God did appoint this kind of priest.} **12**{You can tell that God made the law depend on having the descendants of Levi serve as priests,} because the law must change whenever the way that people serve as priests changes. **13**{You can tell that God has changed how people serve as priests,} because Jesus, whom God has called {a priest}, is not one of the descendants of Levi but is a descendant of one of Levi's brothers. No descendant of this man has served as a priest. **14**In fact, we all know that our Lord {Jesus} is a descendant of {Levi's brother} Judah, and Moses did not write down anything about descendants of Judah serving as priests. **15**Further, {you can tell} even more clearly {that God has changed how people serve as priests,} since God has appointed a different kind of priest{, Jesus,} who serves God like Melchizedek did. **16**He serves as a priest because nothing can keep him from living, which makes him a powerful {priest}. {As this kind of priest,} he does not depend on what God commanded in Moses' law about how human priests {are descendants of Levi}. **17**{You can tell that this is true about him}, because God the Father said {to him}:

"You will never stop being a priest in the same way that Melchizedek was a priest."

18What this means is that God withdrew what he had first commanded {about priests}. {He did this because} that way of doing things was ineffective. **19**{That way was ineffective} because people could not become what God wanted them to be by doing what God previously commanded. Now what this also means is that God provided something better for us to confidently expect. When we confidently expect this, we go closer to God.

20-21 Now God did not guarantee what he said when he made some of the descendants of Levi to be priests. However, he did guarantee what he said {when he made} the Messiah {to be a priest}. Here is what God said to him:

"The Lord has guaranteed what he says,

and he will not do something else:

'You will never stop being a priest!'" So, just as {Jesus serves as a greater priest because} God guaranteed what he said {when he made him a priest},

22so also there is a better agreement, which Jesus guarantees.

23Further, each one {of the descendants of Levi} died and so could not continue {to serve as a priest}. Because of that, there have been many {descendants of Levi} who have served as priests. **24**However, Jesus will never die. Because of that, he will always serve as a priest. **25**Because {he always serves as a priest}, he can fully rescue anyone who, because of what he has done, goes closer to God. {He can do that because} he will never die and thus can always ask God to help them.

26Jesus is exactly the kind of ruling priest that we need. He honors God, he does not think about what is evil, and he does not do what would defile him. He is not one of the people who sin, and he now lives in the highest heaven. **27**Now each {descendant of Levi who serves as a} ruling priest has to present sacrifices {to God} every day. First, he presents a sacrifice to take away his own sins, and after that he presents a sacrifice to take away the sins of the rest of the Israelites. However, Jesus {took away everyone's sins} when he presented himself {as a sacrifice} one time, so he does not need {to present many sacrifices}. **28**In the end, God commanded through Moses that some people should serve as priests, but these priests are weak {and die}. In contrast, when God guaranteed what he said, which he did after he had commanded {those things through Moses}, he enabled his Son {to serve} always as the most effective {priest}.

Chapter 8

1Here is the main idea that I am writing about: a ruling priest like the one I have described is serving for us. He has gone to be with God {the Father} in the heavenly places, and he has begun to rule. **2**He serves in the Most Holy Place and in the most real sacred tent. The Lord {God}, not any human, made {this sanctuary}.

3Now God makes people ruling priests so that they can present sacrifices. Because {that is what ruling priests do}, Jesus too needed to present a sacrifice. **4**So, because the priests {who are descendants of Levi already} present sacrifices {on earth} as God commanded, Jesus would not be serving as a priest were he on earth {right now}. **5**Those priests do what God requires {in a sanctuary that} models the heavenly {sanctuary}. {You can tell that this is true,} because God revealed it to Moses when Moses was going to have the Israelites construct the sacred tent. {At that time,} God spoke to him, “Make sure that everything {about the sacred tent} matches the original {sanctuary} that I revealed to you {when you were with me} on Mount Sinai!” **6**But here is what is true {about Jesus}: he serves in a much better way {than the descendants of Levi do}. In the same way, the agreement that God has made with his people through Jesus is greater {than the agreement that God made with the Israelites}. That is because God promised greater things when he made this new agreement.

7Now {you can tell that} the agreement that God made with the Israelites was not perfect, because God chose to make another agreement. **8**{You can tell that the first agreement was not perfect,} because God declared that the Israelites did not perfectly keep that agreement when he said,

“Here is what I say to you: Pay attention!

Soon I will make a new agreement

with all my people from both the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah.

9{That agreement will} not be like the agreement

that I made with their ancestors

when I lovingly delivered them

from the land of Egypt.

Here is what I say:

{It will not be like that agreement,} because they did not keep it,

so I abandoned them.

10This is the kind of agreement

that I will make with my people, the Israelites,

very soon.

Here is what I say:

I will enable them to understand and obey my laws.

I will be the God whom they worship,

and they will be the people whom I care for.

11No one will ever have to instruct another Israelite,

‘Trust and worship the Lord God.’

{That is} because all my people will trust and worship me,

no matter how important or unimportant they are.

12{That will happen} because I will mercifully forgive them for the wrong things that they have done.

I will never again punish them for the sins that they have committed.”

13When God uses the word “new,” he means that the earlier {agreement with the Israelites} is now old. Further, what is old will soon cease to exist.

Chapter 9

1As for the earlier {agreement that God made with Israel}, it required people to worship God in a specific way in a sanctuary on earth. **2**The sanctuary that the Israelites set up was a sacred tent {that had two sections}. They called the outer section the Holy Place. In it, {they put} a stand for lamps and a table on which they laid out {special} bread. **3**The inner section was on the other side of an inner cloth hanging. They called this {inner section} the Most Holy Place. **4**In it, they put the altar for incense and the sacred chest, both of which they completely coated with gold. In the sacred chest, {they put} a gold container with manna inside{, the food that God gave the Israelites while they lived in the desert}. {They also put in it} Aaron’s staff that God caused to produce leaves. {They also put in it} the stone slabs {on which Moses wrote the most important parts} of the agreement with God. **5**On top of the sacred chest, {they put two statues of} glorious spiritual beings with wings. {These statues} cast shadows on the lid for the sacred chest. {However,} now is not the right time to carefully discuss each of these objects.

6After they had set up all those things, the priests went into the outer section of the sacred tent every day to serve God. **7**On the other hand, on only one day a year does the {current} ruling priest go into the inner section {of the sacred tent}. He has to take blood {from an animal with him}, which he presents {to God} to take away his own {sins} and the sins that the rest of the Israelites committed by accident. **8**The Holy Spirit shows {through what the priests do in the sacred tent} that God did not reveal how to enter the {heavenly} Most Holy Place during the time when he required people to use the first section of the {earthly} sacred tent. **9**This {first section of the earthly sacred tent} figuratively describes the time in which those Israelites lived. In that time, priests presented offerings that could not enable the people who brought the offerings to distinguish properly between what is right and what is wrong. **10**They also followed rules that were only about bodily things, {including rules} about what to eat and drink and how to wash with water often. God gave them these rules to follow until he made a new agreement with his people.

11In contrast, when the Messiah began to serve as a ruling priest, {he gave us} the good things that we now have. He passed through the {heavenly} sacred tent that functions better {than the earthly one}. God, not humans, made this sacred tent, and it does not belong on the earth. **12**Then, when he went into the {heavenly} Most Holy Place only one time, he did not present blood from animals that someone sacrificed{, like the priests who are descendants of Levi do}. Instead, he presented his own blood and freed {his people} from their sins forever. **13**Now {those priests present} blood from animals that someone sacrificed, and they scatter ashes from a female cow, which they have burned, on unclean people. {When the priests do these things,} they really do cleanse the outside of a person. **14**{Since that is true,} what the Messiah does with his blood cleanses people much more! He presented himself as a perfect sacrifice to God, and the Spirit who lives forever enabled him to do so. He cleanses the inside of you all, removing what you do that accomplishes nothing and enabling you to do what the only real God requires.

15Because {the Messiah cleanses the inside of people}, God has made a new agreement through him. That way, God gives to those whom he chose what he promised that they would receive forever. {That can happen because Jesus} died to free {his people} from what they did wrong when they disobeyed the agreement that God made with Israel.

16Now when someone sets up a will, {which is a type of agreement,} that person needs to die before the will becomes effective. **17**In fact, every will is valid only because of a dead person. {That is} because a will is not effective while the person who set it up is alive. **18**Much like that, God definitely required {the Israelites to use} blood when he made the agreement with them. **19**Indeed, after Moses declared everything that God commanded in his law to the Israelites, he picked up {a bowl containing} blood from animals that someone had sacrificed. Then, also using water, red cloth, and parts of a hyssop plant, he scattered the blood on the book {in which he wrote what God commanded} and on all the Israelites. **20**{When he scattered the blood,} he said to them, "This blood signifies {that} the agreement that God made with you {is now effective}." **21**Moses likewise scattered blood on the sacred tent and on every tool {that the priests used} to serve God. **22**Further, God commanded in Moses' law that the priests should use blood almost every time they cleansed {people or things}. In fact, God does not forgive anyone unless a priest presents blood {from an animal that someone has sacrificed}.

23So then, the priests had to sacrifice animals to purify the {earthly} copy of the heavenly {Most Holy Place}. Much like that, {Jesus had to} present an even greater offering {to purify} the heavenly {Most Holy Place} itself. **24**{When he presented that offering,} the Messiah went into the highest heaven, where he reveals himself right now before God to help us. He did not go into a Most Holy Place that humans have made, which is a model of the most real Most Holy Place. **25**Further, he {went into the highest heaven} to present himself as an offering only once. That is not what the {earthly} ruling priests do. They go into the Most Holy Place every year {and present} blood from an animal {that someone has sacrificed}. **26**{If Jesus had actually needed to present himself as an offering more than once,} then he would have needed to die very often since the time when God created everything. But here is what is true {about Jesus}: during this final time period, he presented himself one time only as an offering to make sin powerless. **27**Humans will each die one time only, and then God will decide whether they are guilty or innocent. **28**Much like that, the Messiah presented himself one time only as an offering to take away many people's sins. Then, he will come again {to earth}, not {to take away} sins, but to rescue his people, who are persistently expecting him.

Chapter 10

1The law {that God gave through Moses} is not itself one of the wonderful things that God will give to his people. Rather, it only points to those wonderful things. So, even though the people who go closer to God always present offerings year after year, doing so never enables them to be what God wants them to be. **2**Suppose that {those offerings} actually purified the people who worship God. {In that case,} they would never feel guilty about their sins, and they would stop presenting offerings. **3**But {here is what is true about those offerings}: they remind people year after year of their sins. **4**{Those offerings can only do that,} because blood from animals that someone sacrificed cannot remove people's sins.

5That is why, when the Messiah came to earth, he spoke {to his Father},

"You did not want {people to present} offerings.

Instead, you made a human body ready for me.

6You did not enjoy the sacrifices

that people present to take away their sins.

7So, I spoke {these words}: 'Here I am!

Someone wrote about me in the Scriptures.

I will do what you want {me to do}, my God.'"

8Here is what the Messiah said {to God} first: "You did not want or enjoy the offerings {that people present} or the sacrifices that people present to take away their sins." Those offerings and sacrifices are the ones that the Israelites

present {to God} as he required in the laws {that he gave through Moses}. **9**Then, the Messiah said this second:
“Here I am! I will do what you want {me to do}.” He abolishes {what he spoke about} first in order to set up {what
he spoke about} second. **10**Here is what God wanted: Jesus the Messiah presented his body as an offering one time
only, and by that {offering}, God set us apart for himself.

11Now all {earthly} priests have to stand up day after day while they worship God and present many offerings of
the same kind. These offerings cannot remove {people’s} sins. **12**In contrast, the Messiah presented a single
offering that is always effective in taking away sins. Then, he went to be with God {the Father}, where he sits {on
the throne} and rules. **13**Right now, he remains {there} until God defeats all of his enemies. **14**{The Messiah remains
there,} because he presented a single offering, by which he always makes the people whom God is setting apart
for himself to be what God wants them to be.

15God’s Spirit too confirms to us {that this is true}. Here is what he said first {in the words that I have already
quoted}:

16“This is the kind of agreement that I will make with them,

very soon. Here is what I say:

I will enable them to obey

and understand my laws.”

17Then{, God’s Spirit said this second in the words I have already quoted}:

“I will never again punish them

for the sinful and disobedient things that they have done.”

18When God forgives people for the {sinful and disobedient} things that they have done, no one again presents
sacrifices to take away sins.

19So then, fellow believers, we can be totally sure that there is a way into the heavenly Most Holy Place {for us},
because of Jesus’ blood. **20**Jesus established that new and effective way for us, which passes through the cloth
hanging {into the Most Holy Place}. This {cloth hanging figuratively} represents Jesus {while he lived} on earth.
21Further, {the Messiah is} a ruling priest {who} works for us, God’s people. **22**{Because those things are true,} we
should go closer {to God}, completely serving him and fully believing in him now that he has purified us on the
inside and on the outside so that we no longer feel guilty about evil things {that we have done}. **23**{God,} who
promised {these things to us,} will do what he has said. So, we need to persist in fully believing what we say we
confidently expect. **24**Further, we need to think about each other, particularly how to encourage each other to love
others and to do what is right. **25**{We can do that by} always continuing to gather together {to worship God} and
encouraging each other, even though some people often do not {do this}. Since we know that Jesus is coming back
soon, we should be very eager to do those things.

26{We should do all those things,} because whenever we intentionally and habitually sin once we have completely
understood the true {message about Christ}, no one can present any offering that will take away our sins. **27**{If we
did go on sinning}, all we could do is fearfully wait for God to declare us guilty and, soon after, forcefully punish us
as his enemies, {which would be like} flames burning us up. **28**The Israelites would kill any person who completely
stopped obeying the laws that God gave through Moses, as long as at least two or three people confirmed that the
person had done that. They would not be merciful to that person. **29**But now consider people who shame God’s
Son. They treat his blood as if it were ordinary, even though God used that blood to make his covenant and set
them apart for himself. They make fun of God’s Spirit, who acts graciously. God will rightly punish those people
more than {he punished anyone who completely stopped obeying the laws that God gave through Moses}. **30**{We
know that is true,} because we have encountered God, who spoke, “I am the one who will punish people when they

act against me. I will do so in a way that they deserve.” Further, {he} also {spoke}, “I, the Lord, will decide whether my people are guilty or innocent.” **31**Those who deserve the only real God to punish them should be afraid!

32On the other hand, I want you to think about what it was like when you first learned about the good news. During that time, you continued {to trust God} while you firmly withstood what you suffered. **33**In some cases, people publicly insulted and hurt you. In other cases, you helped other people who experienced those same things. **34**More specifically, you acted compassionately toward those in jail. Also, you rejoiced even when people took away what you owned. {You did that} because you recognized that God has something greater and more lasting for you. **35**Therefore, continue to be confident {that God will do what he has promised}. God greatly rewards those who are confident in this way.

36As you can see, you need to continue {to trust God}. That way, once you have done what God desires, you will receive what he has promised {to give to you}. **37**Here is what a prophet wrote:

“Very soon, the person who is going to arrive will arrive.

He will not wait a long time.

38Further, those who serve me righteously will trust {in me} while they are alive.

But suppose they stop {trusting in me}.

Then, they will not please me.”

39However, we are not those who stop {trusting in God}, whom he will destroy. Rather, we are those who trust {in God}, so he saves us.

Chapter 11

1When people trust God, it makes them sure that they will receive what they confidently expect. {When people trust God,} it makes them certain about things that they do not see. **2**In fact, because the Israelite ancestors trusted God, he approved of them. **3**Because we trust God, we recognize that, by speaking, God set up everything that exists. So then, the things we see did not come from other things we can see.

4Because he trusted God, Adam’s son Abel presented a more acceptable offering to God than did his older brother Cain. Because he trusted God, God approved of him for what he presented and declared that he did what was right. Although Abel died, we can still learn from how he trusted God.

5Because Enoch trusted God, God took him {to heaven}, and so he never died. As {Moses wrote,} “No one could find him. That is because God took him {to heaven}.” Now before God took {Enoch to heaven}, he declared that Enoch pleased him. **6**In fact, people can only please God when they trust him. {That is} because people who go closer to God have to believe that he is real and that he will reward people who want to serve and worship him.

7Because he trusted God, Noah honored God {by believing him} when God revealed to him what he could not yet experience. So, Noah built the ark to rescue his family {from the flood that God would send}. Since Noah trusted God {in this way}, he proved that everyone else was guilty. Further, Noah became a person whom God made right with himself because Noah trusted him.

8Because he trusted God, Abraham did what God said when God spoke to him. He left {his home} to travel to a location that God would soon make to be his new home. When he left {his home}, he did not even know exactly where {this new home would be}. **9**Because he trusted God, Abraham stayed in the country that God had promised {to give him}, but it was not yet his country. He lived with Isaac his son and Jacob his grandson in temporary shelters, {even though} God promised to all three of them {that he would give them this country}. **10**{Abraham lived like that} because he was looking forward to {living in} the secure and permanent {heavenly} city that God created.

11Because he believed, Abraham was able to have a son with {his wife} Sarah even though he was old enough that he could not normally have had a child. {That happened} because he reckoned that God would certainly do what he said. **12**So then, even though he was very old, Abraham had many descendants, {the Israelites}. {Just as God promised,} there are as many {Israelites} as there are many stars in the sky and as there are many grains of sand on a beach by the ocean.

13All those people trusted God until they died. {While they lived,} they did not experience what God had promised {to give them}, but they knew that God would soon do what he had promised. They showed everyone that they did not really belong in this world. **14**Indeed, all people who speak what they spoke {about not belonging in this world} show clearly that they desire {to live in} their own country. **15**But suppose these {faithful people} considered the country they had left {to be their own country}. In that case, they could have gone back there{, but they did not}. **16**But here is what is true {about them}: they longed for a greater country that is in heaven. Because of that, it honors God when other people describe him as the God of these people {who trusted him}. {You can tell that this is true,} because God has made a city for them {to live in}.

17Because he trusted God, when God tested him, Abraham would have presented {his son} Isaac {as an offering}. Indeed, the man to whom God promised {many descendants} was about to present {as an offering} the only child {he and his wife Sarah had}. **18**{In fact,} God {had already} said to Abraham, “The many descendants {that I promised to give you} will come from {your son} Isaac.” **19**{Abraham acted in this way because} he reckoned that God could make dead people alive again. In fact, in a manner of speaking, Abraham did get Isaac back after he had died.

20Because he trusted God, Isaac blessed {his sons} Jacob and Esau, declaring what would happen {to each of them}.

21Because he trusted God, when he was about to die, Jacob blessed both sons of {his son} Joseph. He praised God while he leaned on his walking stick.

22Because he trusted God, when he was about to die, Joseph spoke about how the Israelites would leave {the land of Egypt}. Also, he commanded {them to take} his bones {with them when they left}.

23Because they trusted God, Moses’ father and mother kept Moses hidden for 13 weeks after he was born. They bravely disobeyed what the king {of Egypt} commanded {about killing the sons of the Israelites}. {They did that} because they could tell that Moses was a good child.

24Because he trusted God, when he grew up, Moses rejected how he was living as the {adopted} son of one {of the daughters} of the king of Egypt. **25**He decided to experience how people mistreated God’s people rather than to enjoy sinning for a little while. **26**He reckoned that people insulting him because of the Messiah was more valuable than all the valuable things in {the land of} Egypt. {He thought in this way,} because he focused on how God would reward him. **27**Because he trusted God, Moses departed from {the land of} Egypt. He was not afraid of {what} the king {would do} while he was angry. {He acted in that way,} because he continued {to trust God as completely} as if he could see God, who is invisible. **28**Because he trusted God, Moses led the Israelites in celebrating the {first} Passover festival and spreading blood {from lambs on their doors}. {They did that} so that the spiritual being who killed the eldest children {of the Egyptians} would not kill their {eldest children}.

29Because they trusted God, the Israelites walked across the Sea of Reeds like {they were walking on} hard ground {when God made a path for them}. Then, when the Egyptians tried to follow, they drowned in the water {when God covered the path}.

30Because the Israelites trusted God, he broke down the walls {around the city} of Jericho after the Israelites {repeatedly} marched around the city during one week.

31Because she trusted God, Rahab, who was a prostitute, kept the spies {whom Joshua had sent} safe. {Because she did that,} the Israelites did not kill her when they killed {everyone else who lived in Jericho}, everyone who did not obey {God}.

32I cannot now say any more about this. Indeed, I do not have the time to tell you about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the {other} prophets. **33**Because such people trusted God, some of them defeated foreign armies. Others ruled justly. Others received what God had promised. Others kept lions from eating them. **34**Others stopped fire from burning them. Others survived when someone violently attacked them. Others became powerful when they were weak. Others fought their enemies powerfully. Others completely defeated soldiers from other countries. **35**Some women experienced how God made their {family members} who had died to become alive again. However, other people experienced how others intentionally hurt them {to make them disobey God}. They kept obeying God despite that. That way, God would make them alive again so that they could never die. **36**Further, other people suffered when others made fun of them or struck their backs with ropes. Sometimes, rulers even arrested them and put them in jail. **37**People killed these {faithful people} by throwing rocks at them or by cutting them in half. People tempted them {to disobey God}. People killed them with swords. These {faithful people} wandered around wearing only animal skins. They had nothing, and people persecuted them and treated them badly. **38**{People treated them like that even though} they did not deserve to live in the same place with those who trusted God. {Despite that,} these faithful people had to live in wilderness places, on hills, and in caves in the earth.

39Although God approved of all these people because they trusted him, he did not {yet} give them what he had promised {to give them}. **40**Rather, God prepared ahead of time to give us something greater {than what those people received while they lived}. That way, only when we and they are all together will we all be what God wants us to be.

Chapter 12

1So then, because all those people who trusted God are watching us, we need to persevere in trusting God too. To do that, we need to stop sinning and avoid anything else that could hinder us. **2**We need to focus on Jesus, the one who enables us to trust God at first and then to do so until we die. He himself persevered when he died on the cross, and he did not care that he died shamefully. {He acted in those ways} because he knew that God would make him joyful afterward. Now, he is with God {the Father}, where he sits on the throne and rules.

3You need to think about Jesus, who persevered when sinners quarreled with him, {although} they {only} hurt themselves. That way, you can be strong on the inside and persevere. **4**So far, you have not died while you oppose {what is evil} and work hard not to sin. **5**Further, you have failed to remember what {Solomon} encouraged his children to do, which also applies to you. {Here is what Solomon wrote}:

“My child, learn carefully when the Lord trains you.

Indeed, persevere when he corrects you.

6{You should do that,} because the Lord {God} trains everyone he loves.

Indeed, he severely corrects every child he calls his own.”

7You need to persevere so that God can train you. God acts in these ways toward you because you are his children. {You can tell that this is true,} because parents always train their own children. **8**Suppose God did not train you, even though he trained everybody else. In that case, you would not actually be {God’s} children. **9**Moreover, our human parents trained us when we were children, and we respected them. So, we should accept it even more when our spiritual Father{, God, trains us}. That way, we will live {forever}. **10**Further, our human parents trained us for a short time in the ways that they thought were right. However, God our Father {trains us} in the ways that are best {for us}. That way, we become those whom he has set apart, just as he sets himself apart. **11**Whenever God trains us, we hurt rather than rejoice while it is happening. However, once we learn from how God is training us, we are able peacefully to do what is right.

12Because of all that, you need to prepare yourselves to persevere in trusting God, just like runners prepare their tired bodies to continue running. **13**You need to focus on trusting and obeying God, just like a runner focuses on

running the straightest path. That way, anyone who is spiritually weak will not stop trusting God but will instead trust him more. **14**You should seek to live peacefully with everybody. Also, {you should seek} to set yourselves apart for God. Only if you do that will you eventually be with the Lord. **15**Make sure that your fellow believers fully receive what God has given you. {Be alert for} anyone who begins to behave resentfully and disturbs {fellow believers}. That may lead many {other believers} to behave that way as well. **16**{Be alert for} people who have improper sex or do not set themselves apart for God. {These people are} like Esau, who allowed {his younger brother Jacob} to act as the firstborn child in order to get some food {from him}. **17**{You should avoid being like Esau,} because you realize what happened to him later. He wanted his father to bless him, but his father refused to do so. As you can see, Esau could not change what he had done, even when he cried while he tried {to change it}.

18We have not gone closer to {what the Israelites went closer to when they arrived at Mount Sinai}. {They went closer to a mountain} that they could feel {with their hands}. They saw flames burning, dark clouds, shadows, and a thunderstorm. **19**They heard someone playing a trumpet and God speaking a message. When they heard God speaking, they pleaded for him not to say any more to them. **20**{They did that,} because they were afraid when God commanded them, “You must kill all people and animals that touch this mountain. {You must kill them} by throwing rocks at them.” **21**Further, when Moses saw how frightening everything was, he said, “I am shaking because I am afraid!” **22**In contrast to that, you have gone closer to a heavenly place, Mount Zion. {On this mountain is} the city Jerusalem in heaven that belongs to the only real God. {In the city are} very many spiritual beings who celebrate together. **23**Also {in the city are} those whose {names} God has recorded in heaven. {They are} God’s people, his special children. {There} also {is} God, the one who decides whether all {people} are guilty or innocent. {There} too {are} those who obeyed God. They died, but God has now made them what he wants them to be. **24**Also {in the city is} Jesus, through whom God has made a new agreement. {There} also {is} Jesus’ blood, which purifies us. His blood is more effective than Abel’s blood.

25Make sure that you obey God, who is speaking to you. Consider how some of the Israelites did not obey what God revealed to them from Mount Sinai. God certainly punished them. Now consider how much more {God will punish any of} us who do not obey what he {reveals to us} from Mount Zion. **26**When God spoke from Mount Sinai, it made the earth quake. However, at this time he promises, “One more time, I will make the earth and also heaven quake.” **27**The words “one more time” mean that God will transform everything that he shakes. {He will do that} just as he created all those things. That way, everything that he does not shake will last forever. **28**So, we will live in a kingdom that God will not quake. {Because of that,} we should thank God. By doing that, we respectfully worship God in a way that pleases him. **29**{We should do so respectfully,} because the God we {worship} is {as powerful and dangerous as} a raging fire.

Chapter 13

1Persist in loving your fellow believers. **2**Make sure that you are welcoming other people. {You should do that} because some people who welcomed others actually welcomed spiritual beings, although they did not know {that they were spiritual beings}. **3**Be sure to help those who are in jail. {You should help them} as {you would want others to help you} were you in jail with them. {Also, do not forget to help} those whom others treat badly. {You should do that} because you too are humans {who can suffer}.

4All of you should greatly value how God joins people together when they marry. Further, people who marry should have sex only with their spouses. {You should do those things} because God will declare guilty anyone who has sex with a married person or who has improper sex in any way. **5**You should always avoid desiring money. {You can do that} by being happy with whatever you have. {You should behave in this way,} because God has spoken {these words to each of you}:

“I will definitely not abandon you.

Yes, I will always be with you.”

6Because {God says that,} we boldly speak {these words}:

“The Lord {God} is the one who supports me.

Because of that, I do not fear anyone.

No one can do anything to {hurt} me.”

7Pay attention to the people who were in charge of your group. I mean the ones who told you about {what} God {has done}. Examine {the good things} that happened because of how they lived. You should imitate how they trusted God. **8**Jesus the Messiah has never changed and will never change.

9Do not let other people mislead you by teaching you many kinds of things that do not fit {with the good news}. {You should reject what they teach,} because only what God gives us rightly makes us strong. The food {that we eat} cannot {do that}. In fact, people who act as if {food could do that} gain nothing. **10**We benefit from {Jesus’} offering, {which is greater than the offerings that} the priests presented in the sacred tent. {In fact, those priests} would be unable to participate in Jesus’ offering.

11In the Most Holy Place, the ruling priest would present blood from animals {that he had killed}. {He did that} to take away sins. Someone {then} would completely burn the remains of these animals away from where the Israelites were staying. **12**Therefore, Jesus too died away from where people lived {in the city of Jerusalem}. {He did that} to set {God’s} people apart for himself by offering his own blood. **13**So then, we should abandon everything that could separate us from the Messiah. {As we do that,} we should accept it when people insult us like they insulted him. **14**{We should do that} because, here {on earth}, we do not live in any city that will last forever. Rather, we desire {to live in} the city that God will soon give us.

15With Jesus helping us, we should frequently praise God, as if we were presenting offerings to him. We do that when we say that we believe in Jesus. **16**Further, we need to make sure that we help others by giving some of what we have to them. Doing that is like presenting offerings that please God.

17Those who are in charge of your group {know that} God considers them responsible for you, and so they always focus on taking care of you. Because of that, you should respectfully do what they require. That way, they can {lead your group} joyfully instead of sadly. Indeed, {if they led sadly,} that would not help you at all.

18Please ask God to help me and those with me. {I ask that} because we are sure that we are not guilty. Indeed, we always want to behave properly. **19**I urge you still more to ask God to send me back to you quickly.

20God is the one who makes his people peaceful. He made our Lord Jesus alive again after he had died. Jesus is like a powerful sheepherder who leads us, his sheep. {God made him alive again} because Jesus used his own blood to make {the new} covenant that will last forever. **21**We pray that God will provide you with all {his} good {gifts}. That way, you can do what he wants you to do. In fact, he works through Jesus the Messiah to enable us to do what pleases him. So, let us honor God forever! May it be so!

22I have sent you a short letter. So, I ask you, fellow believers, to please consider carefully what I have said to encourage you.

23I want you to be aware that {the authorities} have released Timothy, our fellow believer. If he arrives here quickly, we will visit you together.

24Say hello to everyone who is in charge of your group. Also, {say hello to} all God’s people. The {believers} who are from the country of Italy say hello to you.

25{I pray that God will} be gracious to you all.

James

Chapter 1

[1]I, James, serve God and the Lord Jesus the Messiah. I am writing this letter to you who believe in Jesus and are living in various parts of the Roman Empire. I greet you all.

[2]My fellow believers, consider it something to rejoice over greatly when you experience various kinds of hardships. [3]Understand that as you trust God in hardships, this helps you to become a stronger person. [4]Endure hardships to their very end, so that you may follow the Messiah in every way. Then you will not fail to do well.

[5]If anyone of you needs to know what to do, let him ask God, and God will tell him. God gives generously to everyone. God does not scold people {who ask for things}. [6]But when you pray to God, you must trust him to answer you. Do not doubt that he will answer and help you. People who doubt God first decide to do one thing, but then they want to do something else. They never settle on a single course of action. [7]Indeed, people who doubt should not think that God the Lord will give them what they ask for {so uncertainly}. [8]People like this can never decide what to do. They make a plan, but then they do not follow it.

[9]Believers who do not have much money should be glad, because God has honored them. [10]But believers who have a lot of money should be glad that God has humbled them {by showing them that their wealth does not make them better than other people}. After all, like wildflowers {that bloom for only a short time and then wither}, rich believers will die {like anyone else}. [11]A wildflower only lasts a short time because when the sun rises, its scorching heat dries out the plants so that their flowers fall off. They are no longer beautiful. Like the flower that dies, rich people will die while they are trying to make money.

[12]God honors those who remain faithful to him in difficult circumstances. Indeed, God will reward them by having them live forever. That is what God has promised to do for all who love him.

[13]When we are tempted to sin, we must not think it is God who is tempting us. No, no one can persuade God to do evil, and God never tries to persuade anyone to do evil. [14]But people want to do evil because of their own desires. When they do, it is just as if they had fallen into a trap. [15]Then, because they have desired to do evil things, they begin to do them, and eventually they do them habitually. {If they do not turn away from their sinful behavior,} they will be separated from God forever.

[16]My fellow believers whom I love, stop deceiving yourselves. [17]Every truly good and perfect gift comes from God the Father, who is in heaven. He created the sun, moon, and stars. But God does not change the way shadows change, appearing and disappearing. God never changes. He is always good! [18]God became our spiritual father when we trusted in his true message. That was what he wanted to do. So now believers in Jesus have become the first people to experience the kind of relationship with God that many more people will have in the future.

[19]My fellow believers whom I love, I want you to know that every one of you should listen patiently {to what others have to say}. You should speak {your own thoughts} carefully. You should control your anger, [20]because when we get angry, we cannot do the good things that God wants us to do.

[21]So stop doing all kinds of evil. Without resisting proudly, do what God has told you to do. God will help you to remember and understand it. This will show that you belong to God. [22]It is important to what God commands, do not just listen to it. People who only listen to it and do not obey it are fooling themselves {into thinking that this will save them}. [23]Now some people hear God's message, but they do not do what it says. Those people are like someone who looks at his face in a mirror. [24]Although he looks at himself, he goes away {from the mirror} and immediately forgets what he looks like. [25]But other people consider God's message carefully. It is perfect and it

enables people to do voluntarily {what God wants them to do}. If these people remember what they have heard and continue to do what God tells them to do, then God will bless them because of what they do.

26Some people think that they worship God properly, but they say bad things. Those people are wrong in what they are thinking. God is not impressed with our worship activities if we continually say bad things. **27**{One of the things that God has told us to do is} to take care of orphans and widows who suffer hardship. People who do that truly worship God, who is our Father. People are also truly worshiping God if they do not think or act immorally like others who do not obey God. God approves of people who do these things.

Chapter 2

1My fellow believers, do not honor some people more than others and at the same time trust in our great Lord Jesus the Messiah. **2**For example, suppose that a person who wears gold rings and fine clothes joins you for worship. And suppose that a poor person who wears shabby clothes joins you as well. **3**And suppose that you show special attention to the one dressed in fine clothes. You tell him, “Please sit here in this nice seat!” But you tell the poor one {to go to a less honorable place, saying}, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit on the floor!” **4**This would show that you thought rich people were better than poor people. It would show that you were making your judgments {about how to treat people} based on evil thinking. **5**Listen to me, my fellow believers whom I love. God has chosen poor people who seem to own nothing of value to trust in him very much. He will give them great things when he reigns everywhere. This is what he has promised to do for everyone who loves him. **6**But you have treated poor people disrespectfully! Think about it! It is the rich people, not the poor people, who are causing you to suffer! It is the rich people who forcibly take you to court {to accuse you in front of judges}! **7**And they are the ones who insult you because you are Christians! **8**{So you should not treat rich people better than poor people.} Instead, you should obey the commandment that Jesus said was so important. It is from the law of Moses: “Love your neighbor as you love yourself.” If you show love to everyone equally, you will be doing what is right. **9**But if you honor some people more than others, you are doing wrong. And {because you are not doing what God has commanded,} God will say that you have broken his law.

10{God will say this} because if you break one of God’s laws, even if you obey all the other ones, it is just as if you had broken all the laws. **11**For example, God said, “Do not commit adultery,” but he also said, “Do not murder anyone.” So if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder someone, then you have become a person who disobeys God’s laws.

12{Always} speak and act towards others knowing that God will judge you based on the commandment he gave us {to love others}. When we follow that commandment, we obey God freely. **13**You should speak and act in this way because when God judges us, he will not act mercifully toward those who have not acted mercifully toward others. But if we are merciful to others, then we can expect that God will be merciful to us when he judges us.

14My fellow believers, some people say, “I believe in the Lord Jesus the Messiah,” but they do not do loving things. What they say will do them no good. If they only believe with words, God will certainly not save them. **15**{To illustrate,} suppose that a fellow believer, whether a man or a woman, is continually lacking clothes and food for each day. **16**And suppose one of you says to them, “Do not worry, get warm, and have the food you need.” But suppose that you then do not give them any clothing or food. Then that will be no help to them! **17**Similarly, if you just say that you believe in Jesus but you do not do anything that demonstrates that, you do not really believe in Jesus.

18But someone might say {to you} that you have faith, while I have works. {He might claim that a person can express his religion through either faith or works and that he does not need to have both.} {But I would say in response that you cannot} show me your faith without works. I{, on the other hand,} can show you my faith by my works. **19**{Let me illustrate how believing in God without doing what God wants you to do cannot save you.} You believe that there is only one true God. You are right to believe that. But the demons also believe that, and they shake {with fear} because they also know that the one true God is going to punish them. **20**Also, you foolish

person, I will give you proof that if someone says he believes in Jesus but he does not do anything that demonstrates that, then what he says does not help him in any way. **21**{Here is the proof.} Abraham, from whom we are descended, showed that he was willing to offer his son Isaac {to God} as a sacrifice {if God wanted him to do that}. God considered Abraham to be a righteous person because he showed that he would obey him {and that proved that he genuinely trusted God}. **22**In this way, Abraham obeyed God because he trusted him. When he obeyed him, that helped him trust God completely. **23**That was how the scripture came true that says, "Because Abraham truly trusted in God, God viewed him as someone who did what was right." Other scriptures say that Abraham was God's friend. **24**{From the example of Abraham,} you should recognize that God considers people to be righteous because of what they do, not simply because they trust in him. **25**Just as he did for Abraham, God also considered Rahab to be righteous because of what she did. She had been a prostitute, but she took care of the messengers {Joshua sent to spy out the land}. She then helped them to escape by sending them back on a safer road.

26All of this illustrates an important truth. Just as a person's body is not alive if he is no longer breathing, in the same way, a person does not really trust in God if he does not express that trust through what he does.

Chapter 3

1My fellow believers, most of you should not desire to become teachers {of God's word}. As you know, God will judge us teachers more severely {than he will judge other people}. **2**{I will tell you why most of you should not become teachers.} All of us often do things that are wrong. But if anyone is able to avoid saying things that are wrong, he has become the person God intends him to be. He will be able to control all of his actions as well. **3**To illustrate, we can put a small metal bar into the mouth of a horse and use it to make the horse go where we want it to go. When we do that, we can direct the horse's large body {just by means of that small device}. **4**Think about ships too. A ship may be very large and the winds that propel it forward may be very strong. Even so, by using a tiny rudder, the pilot can direct the ship wherever he wants it to go. **5**Similarly, although our tongues are very small, we use them to brag that we have done great things. Note also that a fire that starts as a small flame can burn up many trees.

6Just as a fire burns a forest, when we say bad things, we hurt many people. {What we say reveals that} there is much evil within us. When we say bad things, this contaminates all that we think and do. It can ruin our whole life. It is Satan himself who influences us to speak what is evil. **7**To give another example, people have been able to tame a wide variety of wild animals, birds, reptiles, and animals that live in the water. **8**But no one can control the things he says. The things people say are like a dangerous creature that never stops killing people with its venom. **9**We use speech to praise {God, who is} our Lord and Father. But we also use speech to say that we want bad things to happen to people. {That is very wrong, because} God made people like himself. **10**Someone may use his speech to praise God. But then he will use that same speech to wish that bad things would happen to people. My fellow believers, this should not happen! **11**Surely good-tasting water and bad-tasting water do not come from the same source! **12**My fellow believers, a fig tree cannot produce olives. And a grapevine cannot produce figs. Nor can a salty source produce good water. {Similarly, we should speak only what is good, and we should not speak what is evil.}

13If any of you are very understanding, you will demonstrate that by living your life properly. Being wise leads us to act gently toward others. **14**But if inwardly you grudgingly resent other people and you think you are more important than they are, you should not claim to be wise. That would be saying that what is false is actually true. **15**People who are envious and selfish are not wise as God wants them to be. Instead, they are thinking and acting like people who do not respect God. They are following their own evil desires. They are doing what demons would do. **16**We can tell that people who are resentful and selfish are not wise, because they do not control themselves. They take part in many different sinful activities. **17**But the person whom God has taught to be wise is, first of all, morally pure. Such a person also makes peace with others. He is kind to them and gets along with them well. He is generous to people who do not deserve it, and he does practical things to help others. He does not favor one

person over another, and he does not pretend to be something that he is not. **18**When people work quietly to help others get along, they can help those others to have good relationships.

Chapter 4

1I will tell you why you are fighting among yourselves and quarreling with each other. It is because each of you inwardly desires to do evil things. Those desires lead you to fight {in order to be able to do those things}. **2**You desire to have things, but you do not get {them}. This makes you bitterly resent the people who do have them. But you {still} do not get {what you want}, so you quarrel and fight {with others}. If you pray {to God} instead {for the things you desire}, then God will give you {what you truly need}. **3**But even when you do ask God for things, he does not give them to you, because you are asking with bad motives. You are asking for things just so that you can use them to enjoy yourselves in wrong ways.

4You are being disloyal to God {by not obeying him}! You must realize that those who behave as evil people do are hostile to God. So if that is how you decide to live, then you will be choosing to be hostile to God. **5**You must realize that God has purposely told us about this in the Scriptures. There he teaches us that the Spirit he placed in us yearns for us to live our lives in ways that please him. **6**If we are living in ways that do not please God, he is very kind to us. {He will help us live differently if we humbly admit that we have been doing wrong.} That is why this teaching is in the Bible: “God does not help those who are proud, but he does help those who are humble.”

7So choose humbly to obey God. Firmly determine not to give in to the devil’s temptations. This will make the devil give up on trying to tempt you. **8**Be honest and open with God. If you do, he will welcome you into his presence. You who are sinners, turn away from doing what is wrong and do only what is right. You who cannot decide whether you will commit yourselves to God, stop thinking wrong thoughts and think only right thoughts. **9**Show sorrow and be sad and weep {because of the wrong things that you have done}. You have been enjoying yourselves, but you should be serious {and realize how much you need to change}. **10**Humbly show the Lord how sorry you are for your sins. if you do that, he will honor you.

11My fellow believers, stop accusing one another of doing wrong. Anyone who accuses and condemns a fellow believer is really accusing and condemning God’s commandment {that we should love one another}. But if you speak against that commandment, you are not obeying it. Instead, you are acting like a judge who condemns it. **12**The only one who can judge people {according to the law} is the one who gave the law. That is God, who is able not just to condemn people {for breaking the law} but also to pardon them {even though they have broken the law}. You certainly are not entitled to take God’s place and judge others.

13Some of you are {arrogantly} saying, “Today or tomorrow we will go to a certain city. We will spend a year there and we will buy and sell things and earn a lot of money.” Now you listen to me! **14**You should not talk like that, because you do not know what will happen tomorrow. In fact, you do not even know how long you will live! After all, your life is short, like a mist that is visible briefly but then vanishes. **15**Instead {of what you are saying,} you should say, “If the Lord is willing, we will still be alive and we will be able to do one thing or another.” **16**But what you are doing is bragging about all the things you plan to do. That kind of bragging is sinful.

17So if anyone does not do something even though he knows it is the right thing that he should do, he has committed a sin.

Chapter 5

1Now I have something to say to you rich people {who say you believe in Jesus}. Listen to me! You should weep and wail loudly because you are going to experience terrible troubles! **2**Your wealth is worthless, as though it were rotten. Your fine clothes are worthless, as though moths had ruined them. **3**Your gold and silver are worthless, as though they were corroded. {When God judges you,} this worthless wealth of yours will be evidence that you are

guilty {of being greedy}. Just as rust and fire destroy things, God will severely punish you. You should not have been trying to get richer and richer knowing that Jesus was going to return. {When he returns, your riches will be worthless.} **4**Think about what you have done. You did not pay the wages you promised to the workers who harvested your fields. These unpaid wages show how unfair you were to these workers. They are crying out to God because of the way you have treated them. The Lord is a God of great power, and he is listening to their loud cries {and he will punish you for what you have done}. **5**You have bought all the luxuries you wanted for yourselves. Just as cattle fatten themselves, not realizing that they will be slaughtered, you have lived just to enjoy things, not realizing that God will severely punish you. **6**You have arranged for others to condemn honest people. You have arranged for others to kill people who had not done anything wrong. They were not able to defend themselves against you. {But God will judge and punish you for doing all these things.}

7So, my fellow believers, {even though rich people cause you to suffer,} be patient until Jesus the Messiah comes back. Remember that when farmers plant a field, they have to wait for their valuable crops to grow. They have to wait patiently for the rain that comes at the planting season and for more rain that comes just before the harvest season. {This rain is necessary for the crops to grow and mature so that the farmers can harvest them.} **8**Similarly, you also should wait patiently and trust Jesus the Messiah firmly, because he is coming back soon {and he will judge all people fairly}. **9**My fellow believers, do not grumble about each other. That way the Lord Jesus will not have to punish you. He is the one who will judge us, and he will come back soon to do that. **10**My fellow believers, as an example {of how to be patient}, consider the prophets whom the Lord God sent long ago to speak his messages. Although people caused them to suffer much, they endured it patiently. **11**Consider how, when people are able to endure suffering {patiently and faithfully}, we say that God has blessed them. {One example of this is the man named} Job. You know about him {from the Scriptures}. You know that he suffered many things patiently. You also know that God planned {to do good things through what Job suffered}. And from that you can tell that God is very caring and kind.

12Now this, my fellow believers, is something very important for you to realize. You must never take an oath by calling on heaven or the earth or anything else to guarantee a promise that you make. All you need to say is “Yes” or “No.” God will judge you {if you go beyond that and make an oath but then do not keep your promise}.

13Any one of you who is experiencing trouble should pray {that God would help him}. Whoever is happy should sing songs of praise {to God}. **14**Any one of you who is sick should call the leaders of the congregation to come and pray for him {to recover}. They should put olive oil on him {to help him recover} and, with the Lord’s authority, pray. **15**When these leaders pray to God in faith, God will answer that prayer and heal the person who is sick. The Lord will restore his health. If that person has sinned, God will forgive him {for those sins}. **16**Because the Lord is able to heal the sick and to forgive sins, admit to each other the sinful things you have done and pray for each other. Then God will heal you. If people who are right with God pray, God will answer their prayers in powerful ways. **17**The prophet Elijah was an ordinary person like us. But when he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, the land {of Israel} had no rain for three and a half years. **18**Then Elijah prayed again{, asking God to send rain}, and God made it rain and plants grew and produced crops again.

19My fellow believers, if one of you stops obeying the true message from God, then another one of you should persuade that person to do once again what God has told us to do. **20**I want anyone who helps a sinner to repent to know that because of what he has done, God will save the sinner from spiritual death and will forgive his many sins.

1 Peter

Chapter 1

1{I am} Peter, whom Jesus the Messiah sent {to represent him}. {I am writing this letter} to you whom God has chosen to belong to himself. {I am writing to you} who are temporarily living in the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, far away {from your true home in heaven}. **2**God our Father {chose you} according to what he had already decided. {He did this} by his Spirit, setting you apart in order that you may obey {him} and in order that the death of Jesus the Messiah may make you members of a covenant with God. {I pray that} God will increase his kind acts toward you and make you more peaceful.

3Praise God, who is the Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah! Because he is very merciful to us, he has caused us to experience the new birth by bringing Jesus the Messiah back to life after he had died. {God did this} in order that we would have hope that will never disappoint us, **4**{that is,} in order that we might inherit what cannot perish, be defiled, or fade, which is what God has kept for us in heaven. **5**God's power is guarding you by means of your trust {in Jesus}. {He is guarding you} in order to reveal your salvation at the final time {when Jesus returns to judge everyone}. **6**You rejoice a lot because of what will happen then, even though now for a short time many different hardships must grieve you. **7**{These hardships} happen in order to prove that you really trust {in Jesus}. {That trust} is more valuable to God than gold, which someone can destroy even though someone has tested it by {passing it through} fire. Because you trust in Jesus, God will praise, glorify, and honor you when Jesus the Messiah {returns and} reveals himself. **8**You love Jesus, although you have not seen him. Although you do not see him now, you trust him and rejoice with joy that you can hardly express, **9**because you are experiencing the result of trusting him: God is saving you from the guilt of your sins.

10{Long ago} prophets investigated very carefully about God saving you. They spoke what God told them about God graciously saving you. **11**They were trying to find out to whom the Spirit of the Messiah that was in them was referring to, and to what time the Spirit was referring to. {The Spirit was referring to these things} when he told them beforehand that the Messiah would suffer and that glorious things would happen afterwards. **12**God told these prophets that it was not for their own benefit that he was revealing these things to them, but that it was for your benefit. Those people who preached the good news to you now have declared these things to you by the Holy Spirit, whom God sent from heaven, {enabling them to do that}. Angels would like to know more about what these people declared to you.

13As a result of all these things, prepare your minds for action. Be alert. Be completely confident that God will graciously save you when Jesus the Messiah {returns and} reveals himself. **14**Because you obey God like children ought to obey their fathers, do not allow yourself to be controlled by the {sinful} desires you used to have when you did not know {the truth about God}. **15**Instead, just like God, the one who chose you {to belong to him}, is holy, act in a holy manner when you do anything. **16**Be holy, because Moses wrote {in the scriptures that God said}, "Be holy, because I am holy."

17God is the one who judges what each person does, and he judges without bias. Since you call him 'Father,' behave in a way that shows you fear him while you are temporarily living {far away from your true home in heaven}. **18**{Behave in that way} because you know that {God paid to free you} from behaving foolishly, as your ancestors taught you {to behave}. God did not pay to free you with things like silver or gold that will not last forever. **19**Instead, {God paid for you to be free} by the Messiah's priceless death {on the cross}. {That death was} like {the deaths} of the entirely perfect lambs {that the Jewish priests sacrificed}. **20**God chose him to do this before he created the world. But {it was now,} in this last time period, that God revealed him to you. **21**Because of what the Messiah has done, you are trusting in God. He caused the Messiah to become alive again after he had died and has shown how great he is. As a result, you are trusting God and expecting {him to do great things}.

22Because you have made yourselves pure by obeying the true teachings {of Jesus} in order to genuinely love other
believers, love each other sincerely and fervently. **23**{Do this} because God has caused you to experience the new
birth. {You did not experience this new birth} by means of something that will perish. Rather, {you experienced it}
by means of something that will never perish: the message {about Jesus} that came from God and truly lasts
forever. **24**{We know that this is true} because, {as the prophet Isaiah wrote,}

“All people are like grass, and everything that is great about people is like flowers in the grass.

Just as grass dies and flowers whither, {so do people die and what is great about them only lasts for a short time},

25but God’s message lasts forever.”

This message {that lasts forever} is the good news {about the Messiah} that we have declared to you.

Chapter 2

1Because {these things are true}, do not act wickedly or deceive others in any way. Do not be hypocrites, and do
not envy others. Do not speak evil things falsely about anyone. **2**Just as newborn babies strongly desire their
mothers’ pure milk, so you should strongly desire to learn true things about God so that by {learning} them you
may become spiritually mature. {You must do this} until the time when God saves you completely {from this sinful
world}. **3**{You must do this} because you have experienced that the Lord acts very kindly {toward you}.

4You have come to the Lord Jesus. {He is like} a stone {that is part of a building, but he is} alive. Although people
rejected him, God chose him and greatly values him. **5**And you are like stones that are alive. {Like men build houses
with stones,} God is joining you together like a building in which his Spirit dwells. {He is also making you} be like
priests whom he has set apart in order to do spiritual acts, pleasing to God, by means of Jesus the Messiah. **6**What
{Isaiah} wrote {that God had said} in Scripture shows us that this is true: “Pay attention! I am placing in Jerusalem
someone who is like the most important stone in the building. I have chosen him. He is very valuable. And anyone
who trusts in him will surely never be humiliated.”

7Therefore, {God} will honor you who believe in Jesus. However, those who refuse to believe in him {are like the
builders that someone wrote about in the Psalms}: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the most
important stone in the building.”

8{Isaiah} also {wrote in the Scriptures that the Messiah would be like}

“a stone that causes people to stumble,

and a rock that offends people.”

{Just as people become injured because they trip over a rock,}

people become offended because they disobey God’s message;

that is what God determined would happen to them.

9In contrast {to them}, you {believers} are people whom God has chosen {for himself}. {You are} like a group of
priests {who worship God} and rule {with him}. {You are} a people group that God has set apart {for himself}. {You
are} a people who belong to God so that you might declare the praiseworthy things he has done. He has called you
out of your former manner of living, when you were sinful and ignorant about God, and he has made you
understand the wonderful true things about himself. **10**{What Hosea wrote is true about you} who used to be “no
people group at all,” but now are “God’s people group.” At one time “God had not acted mercifully toward you,” but
now “he has acted mercifully toward you.”

11Fellow believers whom I love, you are like foreigners {whose real home is in heaven}. So I urge you not to do the things that your sinful human natures want to do. Those desires will destroy you. **12**Behave well among those who do not know God in order that, concerning the things you are doing, which they falsely say are evil, they will see that you are {actually} doing good things and they will honor God when he comes to judge everyone.

13In order to honor the Lord Jesus, obey everyone who has power {to govern people}. This includes the king, because he has the greatest {human} power. **14**It also includes governors, because the king has sent them to punish those who do evil things and to praise those who do good things. **15**{Obey those who govern people,} because this is what God wants: {He wants you} to do good things in order to stop fools {who do not know God} from being able to ignorantly say that you have done evil things. **16**{Obey those who govern people} as people who are free to do so voluntarily, but do not try to use your status as free people to hide evil deeds. Instead, {obey} as those who serve God should. **17**Be respectful to everyone. Love all {your} fellow believers. Revere God. Be respectful to the king.

18You household slaves {who are believers}, submit to your masters with a completely reverent attitude. {Do this} not only to those {masters} who act very kindly toward you but also to those who act unjustly toward you. **19**{Submit to your masters,} because this is something that God prefers—if someone endures hardships and suffers undeservedly because that person is aware of who God is {and what he wants}. **20**{Submit to your masters,} because there is certainly no honor for you if you endure when someone beats you because you have sinned. However, this is something that God favors: if you endure when you suffer even though you did what is good. **21**{God favors this} because he has called you to suffer while doing what is good. {He has called you to this} because the Messiah also suffered for your sake in order to be an example for you with the purpose that you would imitate what he did.

22"He never sinned.

And he never said anything to deceive people."

23When people insulted him, he never insulted them in return.

When he suffered, he never threatened {those who caused him to suffer}.

Instead, he trusted God, who always judges rightly, {to prove that he was innocent}.

24The Messiah himself was punished for our sins in his body {when he died} on the cross with the purpose that we would live rightly because we are no longer controlled by sin.

God has healed you because people wounded the Messiah. **25**{God healed you} because you were {alienated from God} like sheep that had become lost, but now God has brought you back to Jesus, who cares for you and watches over you {as a shepherd cares for his sheep}.

Chapter 3

1In a similar way, you women {who are believers}, submit to your husbands. {Do this} in order that you may persuade any husbands who do not believe the message {about the Messiah} to become believers without you saying anything to them. **2**{They will believe in the Messiah} because they see that you behave sincerely and {act} reverently {toward them}. **3**Do not make the outside of your bodies beautiful by having fancy hairstyles or by wearing gold jewelry or fine clothes. **4**Instead, make your unseen mind beautiful in a way that will never fade. I mean, have a humble and peaceful attitude. This is something that God values very much. **5**{Do this} because this is the way that the women who lived holy lives long ago made themselves beautiful. They trusted in God and submitted to their husbands. **6**Sarah, for example, obeyed her husband Abraham and called him {her} master. God will consider you to be her daughters if you do good deeds and are not afraid of anything terrible happening to you.

7You men {who are believers}, in a similar way, dwell together with your wives in an understanding manner. {Treat them} as {you would treat} someone who is weaker {than you are}. Honor them as those who will also receive God's gracious gift with you, which is eternal life. {Do this} so that nothing will hinder you from praying.

8To end {this part of my letter}, {I say to} all of you, have the same mindset {among yourselves}. Be sympathetic {toward each other}. Love each other as fellow believers. Act compassionately {toward each other}. Be humble. **9**When people do evil things to you or insult you, do not do the same to them. Instead, bless them, because that is what God has chosen you to do in order that he may bless you. **10**{We know that this is true} because, {as David wrote,}

"As for those who truly want to enjoy good lives,

they must not say evil things or speak deceitful things.

11They must also refuse to do evil, and do what is good {instead}.

They must diligently strive to have peaceful relationships with other people.

12{They must do these things,} because the Lord watches over righteous people.

He listens {and responds} to the prayers of righteous people,

but he opposes people who do evil."

13It is unlikely that anyone will harm you if you are eager to do what is good. **14**However, even if you suffer because you did what was right, God will bless you. "Do not be afraid of or troubled by the things that other people fear." **15**Instead, acknowledge in your minds that the Lord Messiah is holy. Always be ready to answer anyone who asks you to tell them about what you are confidently expecting {God to do for you}. **16**But {answer them} humbly and reverently, while not doing any wicked thing, in order that God may shame those who despise the good things you do as people united with the Messiah. {God will shame them} regarding the very things they are speaking falsely against you. **17**{Do these things} because, if God wants {you to suffer}, it is better for you to suffer because you did what is good than {to suffer} because you did what is evil. **18**{This is true} because the Messiah also suffered. {He suffered} one time for the sake of {other people's} sins. He was a righteous person {who died} for the benefit of unrighteous people. {He died} in order to enable you to be with God. Although people killed him, God's Spirit caused him to become alive again. **19**The Spirit also enabled him to go and announce {God's victory} to the {evil} spirits whom God had imprisoned. **20**{Those evil spirits} disobeyed God long ago, during the lifetime of Noah. When Noah was building a big boat, God waited patiently {to see if people would stop doing what is evil}. {Only} a few people {were saved} in that boat. Specifically, God brought only eight people safely through the waters {of the flood}. **21**That water is a symbol that represents the baptism which now saves you. {This baptism} does not wash dirt off of your bodies. Instead, it shows that we are asking God to assure us that he has forgiven our sins. {This baptism saves you} by means of God having caused Jesus the Messiah to become alive again. **22**After God caused every evil and powerful spirit to submit to him, the Messiah went to heaven, where he is at the place of highest honor next to God.

Chapter 4

1Therefore, because the Messiah physically suffered, prepare yourselves {to suffer as Christians} by thinking {about suffering} the way that Jesus thought{about suffering}. {Do this} because those who physically suffer are no longer involved in sin **2**in order that they would not do the things that sinful people want to do during the rest of their lives. Instead, they live to do the things that God wants them to do. **3**{I say that to you} because you have already used too much of your lifetime doing what the people who do not know God like to do. {Like them,} you committed sexually immoral and lustful acts, got drunk, participated in immoral parties and drinking parties, and worshiped idols, which God has forbidden. **4**Regarding those things, people who do not know God are surprised that you do not join with them {anymore} when they do these recklessly immoral things. As a result, they say bad things {about

you}. **5**{One day} these people will have to admit to God {everything that they have done}. He is the one who will judge all people. **6**This is the reason why {people} preached the good news {about Jesus} to {believers who are now} dead: in order that {those believers} who, although people judged them according to human {standards} during their lifetimes, by means of the Holy Spirit {now} live {forever} according to God's {standards}. **7**All things {on this earth} will soon end. So think sensibly and clearly in order to pray well. **8**Most important of all, love each other sincerely, because if you love others, you will forgive them for many sins {that they may commit against you}. **9**Provide food and a place to sleep for fellow Christians {who come to you}, and do it cheerfully. **10**Serve your fellow believers with the gifts that God has given you. Manage well the various gifts that God has kindly given you. **11**Those who speak {should speak} as if {they were speaking} words that God has spoken. Those who serve {others should serve them} with the strength that God gives them. {Do so} in order to glorify God by {doing} everything that Jesus the Messiah enables you to do. I pray that everyone will see how glorious and powerful he is forever. May it be so! **12**Fellow believers whom I love, do not be surprised by the painful things you are experiencing. {Those things} are testing you {as people test metal by putting it into a} fire. {Do not think that} something unusual is happening to you. **13**Instead, rejoice to the degree that you are suffering the same kinds of things that the Messiah suffered. {Rejoice when you suffer,} in order that you may also be very glad when the Messiah returns and shows everyone how glorious he is. **14**If other people insult you because you believe in the Messiah, God has blessed you, because {your suffering} shows that the Spirit of God, the Spirit who reveals how great God is, dwells within you. **15**Make sure that you do not suffer because you murdered anyone or stole anything or did some other kind of evil thing or because you interfered in someone else's affairs. **16**But do not be ashamed if you suffer because you are a Christian. Instead, praise God that you have the name "Christian." **17**{I say this} because it is now time for God to begin judging people, and first he will judge those who belong to him. Since {he will judge} us believers first, think about what {terrible things} will finally happen to those who do not obey the good news that comes from him! **18**{Solomon} also {wrote in the Scriptures},

"If righteous people must suffer many difficult trials before going to heaven,

how much more will the ungodly and sinful people surely suffer!"

19Therefore, those who are suffering because God wants {them to suffer} should trust God with their lives while continuing to do what is good. God is the one who created them, and he always does what he promises to do.

Chapter 5

1Now I{, Peter,} urge those among you who are elders {who lead the assemblies of believers}; {I am also} an elder. I personally witnessed the Messiah suffer, and I will share in his glorious nature that God will soon reveal. **2**{You elders,} take care of the believers with you as if you were shepherds who take care of their flocks of sheep. {Take care of them} not because you must do it, but because you really want to, as God desires. Do not {do this} in a greedy manner {to get money for doing it}, but do it enthusiastically. **3**Do not act like domineering bosses over the people whom God has assigned to you. Instead, be {good} examples to those believers {by how you conduct your lives}. **4**{If you do those things,} then when Jesus, who is like our ruling shepherd, appears, he will give each of you {leaders} a reward. {That reward will be} glorious {and will} last forever.

5In a similar way, you young men, obey the elders {who lead the assemblies of believers}. Now all of you {believers} should act humbly toward each other because {what Solomon wrote in the Scriptures is true:} "God opposes proud people, but he acts kindly toward humble people."

6Since that is true, humble yourselves before God, who has the power {to save and to punish people,} in order that he may honor you at the proper time. **7**Trust God to take care of everything that worries you because he cares about you.

8Think clearly and alertly, {because} the devil is your enemy, and he is going around, looking for people to destroy. He is like a lion that roars as it searches for people to kill and eat. **9**Resist the devil by continuing to firmly trust {in

the Messiah and his message}. {Do this} because you know that your fellow believers all over the world are suffering in similar ways. **10**But after you have suffered for a brief time, the God who acts kindly {toward you} in every way will himself restore {what you have lost} and will completely strengthen you in every way. God is the one who chose you to experience his glorious presence in heaven forever as you are joined to the Messiah. **11**I pray that he will rule powerfully forever. May it be so!

12Silas has written this letter for me {as I have dictated it to him}. I consider him to be a faithful fellow believer. I have written this short letter to you in order to encourage you and to declare to you that what I have written is about the true and gracious message from God. Continue to firmly believe this message!

13In {this city that we call} 'Babylon,' the believers, whom God has chosen {to belong to him} just like he chose you, send their regards to you. Mark, who is like a son to me, also {sends his regards to you}. **14**Affectionately greet each other with a kiss to show that you love each other. I pray that God will continue to make all you who are joined to the Messiah feel peaceful.

2 Peter

Chapter 1

1{I,} Simon Peter, serve Jesus the Messiah, and I am an apostle {whom he appointed}. {I am writing this letter} to you whom God has caused to believe {in the Messiah} just like he caused us {apostles} to believe {in the Messiah}. {Jesus has done this} by his righteous acts. Jesus the Messiah is our God, and he is the one who saves us. **2**I pray that God will increase his kind acts toward you and make you more peaceful because you know God and Jesus, {who is} our Lord.

3God has given us everything that we need in order to live a life that honors him. {He does this} by his power as God. {He does this} by what we know about him. God is the one who chose us {to be his people} by his glorious and excellent character. **4**{By his glorious and excellent character,} God has promised that he will do priceless and great things for us. {He has done this} so that by {believing in} what he has promised, you will be able to act like God, {and} you will no longer suffer the moral corruption that is in the world through the desire to do sinful things.

5Because God has done all that, do your best to not only believe in the Messiah, {but also} to do good things. {And make sure that you not only} do good things, {but that you also} learn more about God. **6**{And make sure that you do not only} learn more about God, {but that you also} control yourself {in what you do and say}. {And make sure that you do not only} control yourself {in what you do and say}, {but that you also} remain faithful to God in hardship. {And make sure that you do not only} remain faithful to God in hardship, {but that you also} honor him. **7**{And make sure that you do not only} honor God, {but that you also} show affection to each other as family members. {And make sure that you do not only} show affection to each other as family members, {but that you also} love others. **8**{Do these things,} because if you do all these things more and more, then they will make you productive with respect to your knowing our Lord Jesus the Messiah. **9**{Do these things,} because a person who does not do these things {is not aware that these things are important.} {This person is like} a blind person {who cannot see what is around him,} {or like} a nearsighted person {who can only see things that are close to him.} {This person has even} forgotten that God has forgiven him for the sinful things {he did} in the past. **10**Consequently, you fellow believers, make even more effort to make sure that God has chosen you to be his people. If you do these things I have just told you about, then you will absolutely never become separated from God. **11**{This is true} because, {by your doing} thus, God will wholeheartedly allow you to enter into the place where our Lord and Savior Jesus the Messiah will rule {his people} forever.

12Consequently, {because these things are so important,} I am always prepared to keep on reminding you about these things. {I will remind you} even though you already know {them} and are firmly convinced of the true teaching that you now have. **13**Nevertheless, I consider it to be right for me to keep reminding you {about these things} as long as I am alive. **14**{I want to remind you of these things,} because I know that I shall die soon. {I shall die} just like our Lord Jesus the Messiah has made clear to me {previously}. **15**In addition, I will make every effort {by writing these things down} to cause you to keep on remembering these things after I have died.

16{I will do this} because, when we apostles told you that our Lord Jesus the Messiah is coming back in power {some day}, we were not basing {what we told you} on stories that we had cleverly made up. On the contrary, {we told you} what we saw with our own eyes, the divinely majestic Jesus. **17**{I can say we were eyewitnesses} because {we were there when} God the Father honored him and glorified him, {when Jesus heard} a voice from the majestically glorious God. {And the voice said,} “This is my Son, whom I love very much. I am very pleased with him.” **18**We ourselves also heard this voice of God that came from heaven when we were with Jesus on that sacred mountain. **19**And we have what the prophets wrote {previously}, {which is} absolutely reliable. Pay attention to what they wrote, because it is like a lamp that is shining in a dark place {that helps people see where they are going}. {That light} will shine until the day {of the return of the Messiah} dawns and {Jesus}, the star that appears

before the morning, gives your minds greater understanding. [20]Above all, you should know that no prophet could interpret {his prophecy} by his own imagination. [21]{This is true} because no one ever prophesied a {true} prophecy according to what a human wanted. On the contrary, those who spoke {prophecies} from God did so by the Holy Spirit guiding them.

Chapter 2

[1]But people who falsely proclaimed {messages from God} were also amidst the Israelites. In the same way there will also be people who teach false {messages} amidst you. They will introduce opinions {that will result in} eternal condemnation. They will even reject their owner, {Jesus,} who redeemed them. {As a result of this,} God will soon condemn them {for eternity}. [2]And many {people} will do the same unrestrained immoral acts {as these false teachers}. Because of these false teachers, {unbelievers} will speak evil of Christianity. [3]And due to their greedy hearts, {these false teachers} will make a profit off of you by telling you lies. God condemned them a long time ago, and God will certainly destroy them.

[4]{This judgment is certain} because God did not let the angels who acted sinfully remain unpunished. On the contrary, he threw them into hell {where they are} chained in darkness. God imprisoned {these sinful angels} there and is holding them there in order to judge them. [5]And God did not let {the people who lived in} the world long ago remain unpunished. However, he preserved eight people, including Noah, who was a righteous herald, when he destroyed by a flood the ungodly {people who lived in the} world {at that time}. [6]And God condemned the cities {called} Sodom and Gomorrah to be destroyed by burning them completely to ashes. {This resulted in God} making {those cities} an example of what will happen to people who dishonor God. [7]And God rescued Lot, who was a righteous man. Lot was greatly distressed because of the unrestrained immoral acts of the people who acted lawlessly {in Sodom}. [8](When he lived with those wicked people {in Sodom}, that righteous man Lot distressed himself every day by what he saw and heard. {He did so} because of the things people did that were against God's law.) [9]{Since these things are all true, then you can be sure that} the Lord knows how to rescue people who honor him from being tried. And {the Lord also knows how} to keep those who do unrighteous deeds {ready} {in order} to punish them at the time when he judges. [10]And {he will punish} especially those who keep on doing what their sinful hearts want to do, {which are things that make them} displeasing to God. {These people} also scorn divine authority. How bold {they are}! They do whatever they wish! They are not even afraid to insult God's glorious angels. [11]But {God's} angels, {even though} they are much more powerful than these people, do not accuse glorious beings in an insulting manner in front of God! [12]However, these {false teachers} are like animals that cannot think rationally. According to the way they naturally behave, they were born so that others may capture and destroy them. They say bad things about things they do not even know. God will surely destroy them when it is time for their destruction. [13]{These false teachers} suffer harm as the proper punishment for their harmful deeds. {They are} pleased to party in an immoral manner {even} during the daytime. {Like} ugly stains {on one's clothing,} {they are disgraceful to your gatherings}! {They even} celebrate their deceptive deeds while eating {a meal} with you! [14]They constantly want to have immoral sexual relations with {every} woman {they see}. They cannot stop sinning. They lure spiritually weak people {into sin}. {As athletes train for sports, these false teachers} train themselves to be greedy. {God} has cursed them! [15]They refuse to live the way God wants them to. They are acting wickedly. They are imitating what Balaam, the son of Bosor, did {long ago}. He loved {to receive money as} payment for wicked deeds. [16]However, God rebuked him for his wicked deed {against Israel}. {And even though donkeys do not speak}, God used {Balaam's} donkey to speak to him with a human voice and stop his foolish action.

[17]These {false teachers} are {useless}, {like} springs that do not give water. {They are like} clouds that the storm pushes away {before they can give rain}. {God} has reserved the darkness {of hell} for them. [18]{This is true} because they persuade people to sin who have recently {become believers and} stopped doing what wicked unbelievers do. {These false teachers do this} by speaking proud words that are not worth anything. {They persuade these people to sin} by doing whatever their sinful natures want to do. [19]{They also do this} by telling their listeners that they are free to do whatever they want while, at the same time, they themselves are controlled {by their sinful desires} that will destroy them. {This is true} because the thing that overpowers a person's will takes

control of that person. [20]And if they have stopped doing the things that defile sinful human society by knowing the one who rules over us and saves us, Jesus the Messiah, but those {defiling things} {began to} control them again, {then} their situation is worse now than {it was} at first. [21]{This is because} it would have been better for them if they had never learned how to live in the way that pleases God than to learn {this way} and reject {God's} holy commands that {the apostles} taught them. [22]This is a true proverb {that describes} what has happened to {these false teachers}: "They are like dogs that return to eat their own vomit," and, "They are like pigs that have washed themselves and then roll again in the mud."

Chapter 3

[1]Fellow believers whom I love, this {letter} that I am now writing to you is the second letter {that I have written to you}. {I have written} both {of these letters to you} to remind you of the things that your sincere minds already know. [2]{I have written these letters} in order to remind you of the prophecies that the holy prophets spoke a long time ago. {I also want you} to remember what the one who rules over us and saves us has commanded you through the teaching of the apostles {whom we sent to} you.

[3]It is important for you to understand that people who mock will come and mock {the return of Jesus} during the time shortly before Jesus returns. {Those people} will do whatever they want to do. [4]{These mockers} will say, "Jesus' promise to return is not true! {We know this} because since Israel's ancestors died, everything has remained the same. It has been the same way since God created everything!" [5]{They will say this} because they deliberately ignore that God caused the heavens to exist a long time ago by commanding it to be so, and he caused the earth to come out from water and up through water {by commanding it to be so}. [6]And God, by his command and by water, destroyed the world that existed at that time. {He did so} by flooding the earth with water. [7]However, God, by the same command, has set apart the heavens and the earth that exist now for fire. God is keeping them for the time when he will judge and destroy people who act wickedly. [8]Fellow believers whom I love, do not ignore this one truth: from God's perspective a short period of time is no different from a long period of time! [9]The Lord is not acting slowly to fulfill his promise of Jesus' return. Some people think {that this is so}. On the contrary, God is being patient with you, because he does not want any of you to be punished eternally. Rather, he wants everyone to repent. [10]In contrast {to what those mockers say}, the time when the Lord returns will come unexpectedly. At that time there will be a great roaring sound and the heavens will cease to exist. God will also destroy the basic elements of nature by fire. Then God will reveal the earth and everything that has been done in it.

[11]Since God will destroy all these things {I have just mentioned} in the way {I have described}, you must certainly behave in a holy manner and do what pleases God. [12]{Do these things} while expecting and trying to speed up the time of Jesus' return. On account of that day, God will destroy the heavens with fire and melt the basic elements of nature with heat. [13]{Although all those events will happen,} we are expecting the new heavens and new earth that God has promised to create. Everyone will be righteous in that new universe.

[14]Because this is true, fellow believers whom I love, while you are waiting for these things {to happen}, do your best to make sure that Jesus will see that you are not living sinfully {and that you are} at peace {with God}. [15]And think about this: Our Lord Jesus is patient so that more people can be saved. Paul, a fellow believer whom we love, has also said this when he wrote to you. He wrote using the wisdom that God gave him. [16]In all the letters that Paul wrote, he also writes about these things {that I have just mentioned}. In his letters are also some {teachings} that are difficult to understand. People who lack knowledge and stability misinterpret those difficult teachings, as well as the rest of the scriptures. {God} will punish them as a result. [17]Because all these things are true, fellow believers whom I love, and because you already know about these things, keep yourselves from ceasing to live faithfully because you let the wrong teaching of those who live like there is no law deceive you into sinning. [18]Rather, live in such a manner that you experience more and more of the kind acts of the one who rules over us and saves us, Jesus the Messiah. And live in such a manner that you know more and more about him.

I pray that everyone will glorify Jesus both at this time and forever. May this truly be so!

1 John

Chapter 1

1{I, John, am writing to you} about {Jesus,} the Word {of God}, the one who gives life. He existed before there was anything else. We {apostles} listened to him {as he taught people}. We saw him personally. We looked at him and touched him. {So we can testify that he was a real human being.} **2**Because he who always lives came here to the earth and we saw him, we are proclaiming him to you clearly. The one who has always existed, who had been with his Father in heaven, came here to us. **3**We want you to share life with us, and so we are proclaiming to you what we saw {Jesus do} and what we heard {Jesus say}. {If you believe in him,} you will share life, as we do, with God our Father and with his Son Jesus the Messiah. **4**I am writing to you about these things so that {you will recognize that they are true, and that as a result} we will be completely joyful together.

5The message that we heard from Jesus and are proclaiming to you is this: God always does what is right, and he never, ever does anything wrong. He is like a pure light in which there is no darkness at all. **6**If we say that we share life with God, but we live in an evil manner, we are lying. We are not living truthfully. It is as though we are living in the dark. **7**But if we live in a pure manner, as God is pure in every way, then we can share life with each other. This is like living in God's pure light. Then God forgives all of our sin and accepts us because his Son Jesus died for us. **8**If we say that we do not commit sin, we are fooling ourselves. We are refusing to believe the true things {that God says about us}. **9**But God always does what he says he will do, and what he does is always right. So if we admit to him that we have sinned {and reject that sin}, he will forgive us for our sins and he will free us from {the guilt of} everything that we have done wrong. **10**{Because God says that everyone has sinned,} if we say that we have not sinned, we are speaking as if God were a liar! We are rejecting what God has said about us!

Chapter 2

1You are as dear to me as though you were my own children. Therefore, I am writing this to you to keep you from sinning. But if any of you does sin, {remember that} Jesus the Messiah, the righteous one, pleads with the Father {and asks him to forgive us}. **2**Jesus is the one who sacrificed his life for us so that God could forgive our sins. And this is true not just of our sins, but of all the sins that all people everywhere have committed!

3When we obey what God commands us to do, then we can be sure that we truly know God. **4**If someone says, "I know God well," but that person does not obey what God has commanded, then he is a liar. He is not living according to God's true message. **5**But if someone obeys what God has commanded, that person loves God in every way. This is how we can be sure that we are living closely with God: **6**If anyone says that he is living closely with God, then he should conduct his life as Jesus did {when he was here on earth}.

7Dear friends, I am not writing this to tell you to do something new. Instead, I am writing this to tell you to do something that you have known that you should do since you first believed {in Jesus}. This is {part of} the message that {Jesus gave to us and that} we have already told to you. **8**However, if we think about this in another way, I am telling you to do something new. It is new because the way that the Messiah lived was new, and the way that you are living is new. That is because you are ceasing to do evil, and you are doing good more and more. It is as though you have come out of a dark place and have begun to live in the light that is from God. **9**Someone might say that he is living in a good way, just as God wants him to do. That would be like living in light from God. But if he hates any of his fellow believers, then he is still living in a bad way, doing what God does not want, like a person who lives in darkness. **10**But if someone loves his fellow believers, then he is truly living well, like a person who is living in light from God. He will not have a reason to do anything evil {as he would have if he hated a fellow believer}. This is like a person in daylight who has no reason to trip over anything. **11**But anyone who hates a fellow believer is living

in a completely wrong way. He does not understand how he should live, because the wrong things that he is doing are keeping him from understanding God's way. It is as though he is walking in darkness and cannot see where to go.

12I am writing to you, whom I love as though you were my own children, because God has forgiven your sins because of what Jesus has done for you. **13**I am writing to you who have been believers longer than the others. I am writing to you because you are living closely with {Jesus,} the person who has always been alive. I am writing to you newer, but steadfast, believers because Satan, that evil being, has tried to tempt you to do wrong, but you have successfully resisted him. **14**I have written to you whom I love as though you were my own little children because you have a close relationship with God the Father. I have written to you who have been believers longer than the others because you have a close relationship with {Jesus,} the person who has always been alive. I have written to you newer, but steadfast, believers because you are spiritually strong. I have also written to you because you continue to obey what God commands and because you have successfully resisted {Satan,} that evil being{,} when he tried to tempt you to do wrong.

15Do not desire to be like people who do not honor God. Do not desire the things that they want to have. If anyone desires to be like those people, {he is proving that} he does not love God the Father. **16**{I say that such a person does not love God the Father} because the way that ungodly people live is not the way that God our Father teaches us to live. They want to fulfill their physical desires. They want to get for themselves the things that they see. They boast about all of the things that they own. All of these things come from the selfish and ungodly way of thinking. **17**The people who do not honor God will disappear, along with all of the things that they desire. But the people who do what God wants them to do will live forever!

18You who are as dear to me as though you were my own children, {I want you to know that} this is the time just before Jesus returns to earth. You have already heard that a person is coming who will strongly oppose the Messiah. In fact, many people like that, who are against the true Messiah, are already here. Because of this, we know that it is that time. **19**These people refused to remain in our congregations. However, they never really belonged with us in the first place. After all, if they had belonged with us, they would not have left us. But {when they left us,} then we clearly saw that none of them had actually joined with us. **20**But as for you, the Holy Messiah has given you his Spirit. As a result, you all know {what is true}. **21**I am not writing this letter to you because you do not know the true things {that God has told us}, but because you do know them. You also know enough to recognize and reject every lie that is not one of the true things {that God has told us}. **22**The worst liars are the ones who deny that Jesus is the Messiah. All who do that are against the Messiah. They are refusing to believe both in God the Father and in Jesus his Son. **23**Those who refuse to acknowledge that Jesus is God's Son are in no way joined with God the Father. But those who acknowledge that Jesus is God's Son are also joined with God the Father. **24**Here is what you must do{, unlike those people who deny Jesus}. You must continue to believe and live by the truth about Jesus the Messiah that you first heard. If you continue to believe and live by the truth about Jesus the Messiah that you first heard, then you will continue to share life with Jesus the Son and God the Father. **25**And what Jesus promised us is that God will enable us to live forever!

26I am writing this letter to you to warn you about people who want to deceive you {about Jesus}. **27**Here is what you should do {about those people who are trying to deceive you}. God's Spirit, whom you received from Jesus, continues to live in you. So you do not need anyone else to be your teacher. God's Spirit is teaching you everything {that you need to know}. He always teaches the truth and never says anything that is false. So continue to live in the way that he has taught you and continue to live closely with Jesus.

28Now, my dear ones, {I urge you to} continue to live closely with Jesus. That way, when he comes back again, we will be confident {that he will accept us}. {If we do that,} we will not be ashamed to stand before him when he returns. **29**You know that God always does what is right. Because of that, you also know that all those who continue doing what is right are the ones who have become God's spiritual children.

Chapter 3

1Think about how much God our Father loves us! He says that we are his children. In a spiritual sense, this is completely true. That is why people who are unbelievers do not understand us. It is because they have not understood who God is{, and we are like him just as children are like their parents}. **2**Dear friends, at present we are God's spiritual children. He has not yet shown us what we will be {in the future}. {However,} we know that when Jesus comes back again, we will become like him because we will see him as he truly is. **3**So all those who confidently expect to see Jesus as he truly is make themselves free from sin because Jesus himself is free from sin. **4**But everyone who continues to sin is refusing to obey God's laws, because that is what sinning is; it is refusing to obey God's laws. **5**You know that Jesus came in order to make us free from our sins. {You know} also {that} he himself never sinned. **6**Those who share life with Jesus are the ones who do not continue sinning. But all those who continue to sin are the ones who have not understood who Jesus is and they do not really know him. **7**So I urge you who are very dear to me not to let anyone deceive you {by telling you that it is all right to sin}. If you continue doing what is right, that will please God, just as Jesus always does what pleases God. **8**But anyone who continues to sin is behaving like the devil, because the devil has always been sinning, ever since the world began. The very reason that God's Son became a human being was to undo this work of the devil {that kept people continually sinning}. **9**People do not continue sinning if they have become spiritual children of God because God has made them to be like him. They cannot continually sin, because they are God's spiritual children. **10**People who belong to God are clearly different from people who belong to the devil. Those who do not do what is right do not belong to God. Those who do not love their fellow believers also do not belong to God.

11{You should recognize this because} the message that you heard when you first believed in Jesus is that we should love each other. **12**We should not hate others as {Adam's son} Cain did. He belonged to {Satan,} that evil being. Cain murdered his {younger} brother {Abel}. I will tell you why he did that. It was because Cain behaved in an evil way, and {he hated his younger brother because} his younger brother behaved in the right way. **13**Therefore, my fellow believers, you should not be amazed when unbelievers hate you. **14**We love our fellow believers, and this assures us that God has made us spiritually alive. But if someone does not love {other believers}, then that person is still spiritually dead. **15**Anyone who hates one of his fellow believers is doing something just as bad as murdering him. And you know that someone who murders another person is not living in the new way that God enables us to live. **16**Jesus taught us how to truly love each other when he willingly died for us. For our part, we should also be willing to do anything for our fellow believers, even die for them. **17**Many of us have the things that are necessary for life in this world. But suppose that we become aware that a fellow believer does not have what he needs. Suppose also that we refuse to provide for him. Then we are not loving him the way that God taught us to love {people}. **18**You who are as dear to me as though you were my own children, let us not {merely} say that we love {each other}. Let us love {each other} genuinely by helping {each other}.

19-20 By doing that, we can know that we belong to God, who is the source of everything that is true. When we are in God's presence, we may feel that we do not belong to God because of our sins. When that happens, we can reassure ourselves that we truly do belong to him. This is because God is more trustworthy than our feelings and he knows everything about us{, including that we have trusted in him}. **21**Dear friends, when we feel that God does not condemn us {for having sinned}, then we can pray confidently to God. **22**We find that when we pray confidently to God and ask for something, he gives it to us. {We pray confidently like this} because {as people who belong to him,} we do what he commands us to do, and we do what pleases him. **23**I will tell you what God commands us to do. We must trust in his Son, Jesus the Messiah. We must also love each other just as Jesus commanded us to do. **24**The people who do what God commands share life with God, and God shares life with them. I will tell you how we can be sure that God is sharing life with us. We can be sure of that because we have God's Spirit, whom he gave to us.

Chapter 4

1Dear friends, there are many people who have a false message, and they are going around teaching it to others. So do not trust every teacher. Instead, think carefully about what each teacher says and decide whether it came from God's Spirit {or from a different spirit}. **2**I will tell you how to know if someone is teaching truth that comes from the Spirit of God {or if he is not}. Those who affirm that Jesus the Messiah came from God and became a human like us are teaching a message that is from God. **3**But those who do not affirm {that} Jesus {became a real human being} are not teaching a message from God. They are teachers who oppose the Messiah. You have heard that people like that will be coming {among us}. Even now they are already here.

4As for you who are as dear to me as though you were my own children, you belong to God, and you have rejected what those people teach. You have done this because God, who enables you to do what he wants, is more powerful than the devil, who motivates everyone who does not honor God. **5**As for those people who are teaching what is false, they think and live in ways that do not honor God. That is why what they say also does not honor God, and that is why other people who do not honor God believe what they say. **6**As for us, God has sent us. Whoever truly knows God believes and obeys what we teach. Whoever does not belong to God does not believe or obey what we teach. By observing who believes us and who does not, we are able to distinguish between people who teach true messages from God's Spirit and people who teach false messages that are from the devil.

7Dear friends, we must love each other. This is what God wants for us, and it is because he loves {us} that we can love {others}. Those who love {their fellow believers} have become God's spiritual children and know God well. **8**God's character is to love {people}. So whoever does not love {others} does not truly know God. **9**I will tell you how God has shown us that he loves us. He sent his only Son to this earth so that his Son would enable us to live eternally because of what he did for us. **10**I will tell you what loving {someone} really means. Our efforts to love God do not define what it means to love {someone}. No, God himself did that by loving us so much that he sent his Son to offer himself as a sacrifice in our place. When Jesus did that, God could forgive the sins of people who trust in Jesus instead of punishing them. **11**Dear friends, since God loves us like that, we certainly ought to love each other!

12No one has ever seen God. Nevertheless, when we love each other, we can see that God is working in us and that he is the one who enables us to love others, just as he intended for us to do. **13**This is how we can be sure that we are sharing life with God and that God is sharing life with us: He has given us his own Spirit. **14**We {apostles} have seen God's Son {Jesus on earth}, and we solemnly tell others that the Father sent him to save the people in the world {from suffering eternally for their sins}. **15**So God continues to share life with those who say the truth about Jesus. They say, "Jesus is the Son of God." And so they continue to share life with God. **16**We have experienced how God loves us and we believe that he loves us. Because God's nature is to love people, those who continue to love others share life with God, and God shares life with them. **17**When we continue to share life with God, then God has achieved his purpose in loving us. As a result, when the time comes for God to judge us, we will be confident {that he will not condemn us}. This is because we are {loving others as we live} in this world just as Jesus is. **18**We will not be afraid {of God} if we truly love him, because those who love {God} completely cannot be afraid {of him}. We would be afraid only if we thought that he would punish us. So those who are afraid {of God} have not completely understood how much he loves them, and they are not loving {God} completely. **19**We love {God and others} because God loved us first. **20**People are lying if they say that they love God but they also hate a fellow believer. After all, we can see our fellow believers. But we have not seen God. So those who do not love one of their fellow believers certainly cannot be loving God, {because it is much easier to love someone whom you can see than someone whom you cannot see}. **21**Keep in mind that this is what God has commanded us: If we love him, we must also love our fellow believers.

Chapter 5

1All those who believe that Jesus is the Messiah are spiritually children of God. Now, whoever loves anyone who is a father {certainly} loves his child also. {So if we believe in Jesus, then we love God, and therefore we should also love his spiritual children, our fellow believers.} **2**We can be sure that we do truly love God's spiritual children when we love God and do what he commands us to do. **3**I am saying this because what loving God really means is that we do what he commands us to do. And it is not difficult to do what he commands us to do. **4**Here is the reason why it is not difficult for us to do what God commands. All of us who have become God's spiritual children have been able to refuse to do what unbelievers want us to do. There is one reason why we are stronger than everything that is against God. It is because we trust in Jesus. **5**I will tell you who is stronger than everything that is against God: It is anyone who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

6Jesus the Messiah is the one who came {to earth from God}, experiencing both {the} water {of his baptism} and {the} blood {of his death on the cross}. God showed that he had truly sent Jesus not only {when John baptized Jesus} in water, but also when Jesus' blood flowed from his body {when he died}. And God's Spirit declares {truthfully that Jesus the Messiah did these things}, because the Spirit is completely truthful. **7**So there are three ways by which we know {that Jesus is the Messiah who came from God}. **8**{Those three ways are:} what God's Spirit tells us, what happened {when John baptized Jesus} in water, and what happened when {Jesus'} blood flowed {from his body when he died on the cross}. These three things all tell us the same thing{, that Jesus came from God}. **9**We rely on what people tell us when we have to decide about something. But we can certainly rely much more on what God tells us. So let me tell you what God has told us about who his Son is. **10**{First, however, let me say that} those who trust in the Son of God already know that what God says about him is true. But those who do not believe what God says are calling him a liar because they have refused to believe what God has testified about his Son. **11**Now this is what God has told us {about who his Son is}: "I gave you eternal life, and my Son is the one who makes this life possible." **12**Those who share life with God's Son {Jesus} have begun to live forever {with God}. Those who do not share life with God's Son have not begun to live forever.

13Because I want you to know that you will live forever, I have written this letter to you. This is for you who believe that Jesus is the Son of God. **14**I also want you to know that we can be very confident that God wants to do what we ask of him when we pray for what he desires. **15**Since we know that God wants to give us whatever we ask of him, {if it is what he desires,} then we also know that God is already giving us what we ask of him.

16For example, suppose someone sees one of his fellow believers sinning in a way that would not separate him from God eternally. Then he should ask {God to restore the one who is sinning}. If he does that, then God will bring that person back into spiritual life with himself. However, I am saying this only about people who are sinning in a way that would not separate them from God eternally. There is sin that causes people to separate from God eternally. I am not saying that you should pray for people who are sinning in that way. **17**Every wrong thing that people do is a sin {against God}, but there are some sins that will not separate a person from God eternally. **18**We know that everyone who has become God's spiritual son or daughter does not continually sin. Instead, those who have God as their spiritual Father are careful to keep themselves {from sinning} so that Satan, that evil being, does not harm them {spiritually}. **19**We know that we belong to God. We also know that Satan, that evil being, is controlling all the people who are unbelievers. **20**We also know that the Son of God has come among us and has made it possible for us to understand {what is true}. He did this so that we can truly know the genuine God. And we are sharing life with the genuine God, {that is,} with his Son, Jesus the Messiah. Jesus is truly God, and he is the one who gives us {this new,} eternal life.

21I say this to you who are as dear to me as though you were my own children: "Be careful that you never give yourselves to anything that is a false god."

2 John

Chapter 1

1{I am John,} the elder. {I am writing this letter} to you, the congregation {of people} that God has chosen {to belong to him}. I sincerely love all of you believers. Not only do I myself love you, but all those who know and accept the true message {that Jesus taught} also love you. **2**{We love you} because we have all accepted God's true message. This true message has become a part of us and will be with us forever. **3**God the Father and Jesus the Messiah, the Father's Son, will {continue to} act kindly and mercifully toward us and will make us peaceful. {They will do this because} they are truthful and they love {us}.

4I have learned that some of the believers from your congregation are living according to the true message {that God has taught us}. That made me very happy. This is just what our Father commanded us to do.

5And now, dear congregation, I ask you {to do what God commanded:} that we should love each other. I am not writing this to you as a new thing that God has commanded {us to do}. Instead, we have known this command to love each other from when we first believed in the Messiah. **6**This is what it means to love {God and each other}. We should obey what God commands us to do. This is what God commands you, {to love each other,} so you need to do it. You have heard this from when you first believed in the Messiah.

7I say this because there are many people in this world who travel around, deceiving people. These deceptive people refuse to say that Jesus the Messiah was a man with a human body. This {teaching} comes from the {original} deceiver, the one who opposes the Messiah. **8**Be careful so that you do not {let those teachers deceive you! If you let them deceive you, you will} lose everything that we have worked for. So be careful to make sure that you receive the complete benefit! **9**Those who do not continue to believe and teach the things that the Messiah taught, but instead believe and teach other things, do not belong to God. But those who continue to believe and teach what the Messiah taught do belong to both {God,} our Father{,} and to {Jesus,} his Son. **10**So when any teacher comes to you who does not teach that the Messiah came as a man with a real body, do not welcome him into your homes! Do not even greet him {or wish him well in any way, so that you do not encourage him}. **11**If you greet these people respectfully, you are helping them to do the evil things that they do.

12I have much more that I want to say to you. But I have decided not to write them to you in a letter. Instead, I hope to be with you soon and to talk with you personally. Then we will be completely joyful together. **13**Your fellow believers in the congregation here, whom God has also chosen, greet you.

3 John

Chapter 1

1{From John} the Church Leader. To Gaius, my dear friend, whom I truly love. **2**Dear friend, I am asking God to make everything go well for you and to keep you healthy physically, just as you are healthy in respect to God. **3**I know that you are healthy in respect to God because some fellow believers came here and told me about your truthful way of living. They said that you live according to the true message about Jesus. That makes me very happy. **4**This is what makes me the very happiest—when someone tells me that the people whom I have helped to follow Jesus are living according to the true message from God! **5**Dear friend, you are serving Jesus loyally whenever you do things to help fellow believers, even those whom you do not know. **6-7**Some of them have reported before the congregation {here} how you have shown that you love them. Such people are traveling in order to be obedient to Jesus and they have decided to allow only fellow believers to help them as they travel. Therefore it is good that you give such people what they need for traveling in a {generous} way that honors God. **8**In fact, all of us {who believe in Jesus} should give these people whatever they need. Then it will be as though we are working alongside them as they help others to know God's true message.

9I wrote a letter to your group of believers to tell them to help those other believers. However, Diotrephes, who wants to dominate your group, refuses to do this. **10**So when I arrive there I will publicly tell everyone what he does: He says bad things about us that are not true. In addition to doing that, he also refuses to welcome the believers {who are traveling in order to do God's work}. He even prevents those who do want to welcome them and forces them to leave the group of believers!

11Dear friend, do not copy a bad example {like that}. Instead, do the good things that you see good people doing. {Remember that} people who do good deeds truly belong to God. But anyone who keeps doing what is bad does not know God.

12People widely praise Demetrius as a good person. The way that he lives according to God's true message also makes it clear that he is a good person. We also confirm that he is a good person, and you know that what we say is true.

13There are many {more} things about which I could write to you. But I do not want to write to you {about them} in a letter. **14**Instead, I hope to come and see you soon. Then we will talk directly with one another. **15**I pray that God will help you live peacefully. The believers {here} greet you. Please greet for us {each of} the believers {there} individually.

Jude

Chapter 1

1{I,} Jude, serve Jesus the Messiah, and I am a brother of James. {I am writing} to you whom God has called, to you whom God the Father loves, to you whom Jesus the Messiah is keeping {for himself}. **2**I pray that God will increase his merciful acts toward you and make you more peaceful and make you experience more of his love.

3{Fellow believers} whom I love, I tried my best to write {a letter} to you about how God has saved all of us {who believe}. However, I needed to write {this letter instead} in order to urge you to defend the true things that we believe. {These are things} that God has given for all time to all those whom he has made holy. **4**{I am urging you to do this} because some men have crept stealthily {into your meetings}. {They are men} whom God has chosen to condemn a long time ago. They do ungodly things. They think that our God permits people to be sexually immoral because he is kind. {They also} oppose what is true about Jesus the Messiah, who alone owns us and rules over us.

5Although you previously knew all these things, I desire to remind you {of them}. {Remember} that after Jesus rescued the people {of Israel} from the country of Egypt, he destroyed those people {among them} who did not trust him. **6**Also, {some} angels did not continue to remain in their proper places where they had authority but abandoned them. {Because they did this} God has imprisoned them forever in darkness {in hell}. {God did this} in order to judge them on the important day {when he judges everything}. **7**The same is true of {the people who lived in the cities of} Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities near them. They acted in a sexually immoral way in the same way as those angels did. They participated in all kinds of improper sexual acts. By causing these {angels and people} to suffer for eternity in the fire of hell, God is making them an example {of those who reject him}. **8**Similarly, these {false teachers} are dreamers who not only make their own bodies dirty by living immorally, but also reject the Lord's commands. They even insult God's glorious angels.

9Even the archangel Michael was not so bold as to speak slanderous accusations against Satan when he argued with him concerning the dead body of Moses. Instead, he {merely} said, "May the Lord reprove you!" **10**By contrast, these {false teachers} speak evil words about spiritual things that they do not understand. They are just like animals that cannot think rationally. The things that they are naturally able to understand are destroying them.

11How sad it is for them! They act like Cain, {who murdered his brother}. They have dedicated themselves to committing the same sin that Balaam committed in order to get money. God will certainly destroy them like he destroyed Korah and those who rebelled {against Moses with him}. **12**These people are shamelessly eating with you. At your fellowship meals they are like rocks hidden under the water that ships crash against. They only take care of themselves. They are {useless,} like clouds that the wind carries away before they can give rain. They are {useless,} like trees that don't bear fruit at harvest time. {They are like trees} that will die twice because God will uproot them. **13**They are {uncontrollable,} like the sea's thrashing waves. They display their disgraceful acts just like the waves bring up foam. {They are like} stars that do not stay where they should in the sky. God is reserving the dark gloom {of hell} for them forever.

14Even Enoch, the seventh person in the line of people who descended from Adam, spoke about these false teachers when he said: "Listen carefully to this: The Lord will certainly come with a countless number of his holy {angels}. **15**{They will come} to judge everyone and rebuke everyone for all their ungodly deeds that they have done in ungodly ways, and for all the harsh insults that these people, who sin and dishonor God, spoke against Jesus." **16**These {false teachers} grumble {to themselves} and complain {to others}. They live according to their sinful desires and brag about themselves. They flatter people in order to get what they want {from them}.

17But you {fellow believers} whom I love, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus the Messiah said long ago. **18**{Remember} that they told you, "In the last days {before Jesus returns,} there will be people who mock {the true

things that God has told us}. {They will} live according to their own sinful desires that dishonor God.” **19**These {mockers} are the people who are making believers angry with each other. {They live according to their} natural instincts. The {Holy} Spirit does not dwell within them.

20However, you {fellow believers} whom I love, by increasing your trust in God and by praying with the Holy Spirit’s help, **21**keep living in a way that enables you to experience God’s love. {Do this} while expecting the merciful return of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, {which will result in} living eternally {with him}.

22And be merciful to those who are confused {about what they should believe}. **23**But rescue other people urgently, as if you are pulling them out of the fire of hell. And be merciful to some other people, but be cautious with them, as if just touching their clothing could make you sinful.

24God is able to prevent you from returning to a sinful life. {He is also able} to take you without sin into his glorious presence. {You will stand there} with great joy. **25**There is only one God. He has saved us as a result of what our Lord Jesus the Messiah {did for us}. I pray that everyone will recognize that God is glorious, majestic, powerful, and rules with great authority. {He was like that} before time began. {He is like that} today, and {he will remain like that} forever! May it truly be so!

Revelation

Chapter 1

1{This book is about} things that God revealed to Jesus the Messiah. These things are just about to happen. God revealed them to Jesus so that he could tell the people who believe in him about them. Jesus shared these things by sending his angel {to show them} to {me,} John, a man who serves him faithfully. **2**I, John, am reporting {to you} everything that I saw concerning this message from God that Jesus the Messiah revealed to me. **3**How happy is the person who reads this book of prophecy {for others to hear}, and how happy are all who hear it and obey what this prophecy says, because these events will happen soon. **4**I, John, am writing this letter to you seven groups of believers in the province of Asia. May God continue to be kind to you and make you peaceful. God exists, he has always existed, and he will come {and judge everyone} in the future. May the seven spirits who are in front of the throne of God also continue to be kind to you and make you peaceful. **5**May Jesus the Messiah also continue to be kind to you and make you peaceful. He has reliably told us the message from God. He is the first one whom God caused to become alive again after he had died. He is the one who rules the kings of the world. Because he loves us, he shed his blood for us when he died on the cross, and as a result, God has forgiven our sins. **6**Jesus is the one who has caused us to become people over whose lives God rules. He has also made us priests who serve God, who is the Father of Jesus. May people glorify Jesus and acknowledge him as their ruler throughout eternity. May it be so! **7**Pay attention! Jesus is going to come back from heaven through the sky. Everyone will see him, including those who killed him by nailing him to a cross. When they see him coming, every people group in the world will grieve {in sorrow for their sins}. May it be just like that! **8**The Lord God says: "I am the one who began all things. I am the one who will cause all things to come to an end. I am the one who exists, who has always existed, and who will come {and judge everyone} in the future. I am the one who rules over everything and everyone." **9**I, John, believe in Jesus as you do. Like you, I am patiently enduring the troubles that everyone experiences whose life Jesus rules. {The Roman government had put} me {in exile} on the island of Patmos because I was telling people God's message about who Jesus is. **10**It was a Sunday, the day {on which believers gather to worship because God made Jesus alive again on that day}. The Holy Spirit inspired me so that I could see and hear things in a vision. I heard someone speaking behind me. His voice was as loud as the blast of a horn. **11**{The person speaking} said {to me}, "Write what you see on a scroll. Send what you have written to seven groups of believers. {Send it to the believers} in the cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea." **12**{When I heard this voice,} I turned my head to see who was speaking to me. When I turned, I saw seven golden lamp holders. **13**In the midst of the lamp holders I saw someone who looked like a human being. He wore a robe that reached down to his feet. He also wore a band of golden fabric across his chest. **14**The hair on his head was gleaming like white wool or like white snow. His eyes were {bright} like a fiery flame. **15**His feet shone like bronze that the heat of a furnace had refined. {When he spoke,} his resonant voice was like the noise of a great river of rushing water. **16**{The one who looked like a human} was holding seven stars in his right hand. A sword with two sharp edges was extending from his mouth. His face shone as brightly as the sun shines during the middle of the day. **17**When I saw him, I bowed down in front of him. I was so overcome that I could not move. But he put his right hand on me and said to me, "Do not be afraid! I am the one who began all things, and I am the one who will cause all things to end. **18**I have been alive forever. When I came to earth, I died, but indeed I am now alive again for all eternity. I have the power to make anyone who has died become alive again. **19**Therefore, write down this vision that you are seeing of me. I will reveal the truth to you about what is happening now and about what will happen in the future. I want you to write down those things as well. **20**I will explain the symbolic meaning of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lamp holders. The seven stars represent the angels of the seven groups of believers. The seven lamp holders represent the seven groups of believers.

Chapter 2

1Write {this message} to the angel of the group of believers in the city of Ephesus: ‘I am the one who holds the
seven stars in his right hand and who walks among the seven golden lamp holders. This is what I say to you: **2**“I am
aware of all that you have done. {I am aware of how hard} you have worked {for me}. {I am aware of how} patiently
you have endured {difficult times}. {I am also aware that} you do not accept wicked people. When people falsely
claim to be genuine leaders, you prove that they are lying. **3**{I am aware of} how patiently you have endured. {I am
also aware that} you have suffered for my sake. {I am also aware that} you have not abandoned your faith in me
{even though you have suffered}. **4**Nevertheless, I must criticize you about something: You no longer love me as
you did when you first believed in me. **5**Therefore, remember how you used to love me. Love me again the way you
did at first. Now if you do not love me again in that way, I will judge you and I will not allow you to continue being a
group of believers. **6**However, I do praise you for something that you are doing well. You refuse to accept what the
disciples of Nicolaus are doing. {Those disciples eat food that people have sacrificed to idols and they commit
sexual sins.} I myself completely reject what they are doing. **7**Everyone who is spiritually discerning should pay
attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the groups of believers. I will permit anyone who is victorious to eat
{fruit} from the tree that gives life. That tree is in the garden of God.’” **8**Next, write {this message} to the angel of
the group of believers in the city of Smyrna: ‘I am the one who began all things and who will cause all things to
end. I am also the one who died and became alive again. This is what I say to you: **9**“I am aware that people have
persecuted you. {I am aware that} you are poor, although you have everything you need spiritually. I am aware
that} people are insulting you. Those people claim to be Jews, but they are not acting as if they truly belong to God.
When they gather together, they help the devil {instead of serving God}. **10**Those people are going to make you
suffer. Do not be afraid, but watch out! The devil will soon lead them to put some of you in jail. The devil wants to
show that you will abandon your faith in me if you suffer. You will have to suffer for ten days. But remain loyal to
me even if you have to die. If you do, I will give you {everlasting} life as a reward. **11**Everyone who is spiritually
discerning should pay attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the groups of believers. Whoever is victorious
will never die a second time.’” **12**Next, write {this message} to the angel of the group of believers in the city of
Pergamum: ‘I am the one who has a sword with two sharp edges. This is what I say to you: **13**“I am aware of where
you live. {It is a place} where Satan controls people. {I am also aware that} you are very loyal to me. You did not
abandon your faith in me even when people attacked {your fellow believer} Antipas. He told others about me, and
he remained loyal to me. People killed him right in front of you, because Satan has such an influence in your city.
14Nevertheless, I must criticize you about a few things. Some people in your group firmly believe that they should
do what {the ancient prophet} Balaam taught. It was Balaam who showed Balak{, the king of Moab,} how to tempt
the people of Israel to sin. Balak led the Israelites to eat meat that people had sacrificed to idols. Balak also led the
Israelites to commit sexual sins. **15**Just as Balak followed Balaam’s advice, some people in your group firmly believe
that they may similarly do what the disciples of Nicolaus teach. {They eat food that people have sacrificed to idols
and they commit sexual sins.} **16**But what the disciples of Nicolaus teach is wrong. So everyone in your group must
stop doing those things! Now if some of you do not stop, I will immediately judge those people. I will pronounce a
sentence of judgment against them and punish them. **17**Everyone who is spiritually discerning should pay attention
to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the groups of believers. To the one who is victorious I will award some special
bread that I have hidden for him. I will also give him a white pebble upon which I have written a new name for him.
No one will know what this name is except the one to whom I give it.’” **18**Next, write {this message} to the angel of
the group of believers in the city of Thyatira: ‘I am the Son of God, whose eyes shine like a fiery flame and whose
feet shine like bronze. This is what I say to you: **19**“I am aware of all that you are doing. {I am aware that} you love
one another because you love me. {I am aware that} you are very loyal to me. {I am aware of how} you are serving
me. {I am aware that} you are enduring patiently. {Finally, I am aware that} you are now doing more than you did
when you first believed in me. **20**Nevertheless, I must criticize you about something. You tolerate a woman in your
assembly {who is like that wicked queen in the Old Testament whose name was} Jezebel. She claims {falsely} that
she teaches the truth from God. But in fact, by what she teaches, she is misleading people who believe in me. She
is teaching them to commit sexual sins and to eat meat that other people have sacrificed to idols. **21**Although I
have allowed her {sufficient} time to stop teaching these things, she refuses to stop. She continues to act
immorally. **22**Pay attention! I am going to punish her with a terrible sickness. I will also cause those who act

immorally as she does to suffer greatly if they do not stop doing what she does **23**And {as a judgment against her,} I will kill the children {she has had as a result of her sexual immorality}. Then all the groups of believers will recognize that I examine what everyone thinks and desires. I will punish or reward each one of you as you deserve. **24**But the rest of you believers in the city of Thyatira have not obeyed this woman's teachings. You have not taken part in what she calls the secret practices that Satan taught her. I have something to say to you as well. I am going to ask you to do just one thing. **25**Just continue to obey the true teaching that you have received until I return. **26**To the one who is victorious, who continues to do what I command until he dies, I will give power to rule the people groups on earth. **27**Those to whom I give this authority will rule the people groups with irresistible power. They will destroy evildoers as completely as if they were smashing clay pots. **28**{They will rule so powerfully because} I will share with them the authority that I myself have received from God my Father. I will also give them the assurance that God is beginning a wonderful new era. **29**Everyone who is spiritually discerning should pay attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the groups of believers.'"

Chapter 3

1Write {this message} to the angel of the group of believers in the city of Sardis: 'I am the one who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I have these things to say to you: "I am aware of what you are doing. You have a reputation for being spiritually vigorous. However, you are not really acting out of zeal for me. **2**Be careful! You are at risk of losing your devotion for me completely. Renew the devotion that you still have left. You have not yet done all that God knows you should have done. **3**So remember how eagerly you accepted God's instruction when you heard it. Be sorry for disobeying and start obeying again. If you are not careful to obey me, I will judge you when you are not expecting it. You will not know at what time I am going to punish you. **4**Nevertheless, there are a few believers there in the city of Sardis who have not been doing what is wrong. They will live with me {forever} and be pure in every way. This is what they deserve. **5**In this way I will completely purify the one who is victorious. I will make sure that his name always remains in the Book of Life. I will tell God my Father and his angels that I know him personally. **6**Everyone who is spiritually discerning should pay attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the groups of believers.'" **7**Write {this message} to the angel of the group of believers in the city of Philadelphia: 'I am the one who always does what is right. I am the one who always says what is true. Just as King David had authority to allow people to enter the ancient city of Jerusalem, so I have the authority to allow people to enter heaven. If I create an opportunity for someone, then no one can deny him that opportunity. If I deny an opportunity to someone, then no one can give him that opportunity. I have these things to say to you: **8**"I know what you are doing. I know that although you are weak, you have obeyed my commands You have acknowledged that you believe in me. Be aware that I am giving you an opportunity that no one will be able to deny to you. **9**Pay attention! Some people {are denying that you belong to me. Those people} claim to be Jews, but they are not acting the way people do who truly belong to God. When they gather together, they help the devil {instead of serving God}. Pay attention! I will make those people recognize that I love you. They will come and honor you greatly when they recognize this. **10**You obeyed me when I commanded you to endure suffering patiently. And so I will keep you safe during the time of trouble that all of humanity will soon experience. How people everywhere respond to this trouble will show what they are really like. **11**I am coming soon. So continue to believe in me. Do not let anyone cause you to lose the reward that God wants to give you. **12**I will make the one who is victorious secure, like a pillar in the temple of my God. He will remain in God's temple forever. I will write my God's name on him. I will also write on him the name of the city of my God. That city is the New Jerusalem. It will come down out of heaven from my God. I will also write my new name on the one who is victorious. **13**Everyone who is spiritually discerning should pay attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the groups of believers.'" **14**Write this message to the angel of the group of believers in the city of Laodicea: 'I am the one who confirms all of God's promises. I am the one who testifies about God with complete reliability. I am the ruler over all of God's creation. I have these things to say to you: **15**"I am aware of what you are doing. You have not abandoned your faith, but you do not love me very much. I would rather have you commit yourselves for me or even against me! **16**But you are just mediocre. You do not love me very much, but you still claim that you believe in me. That is disgusting, and because of it, I am going to reject you. **17**You keep bragging about how very rich you are. You do not realize that you are actually unhappy. You need someone to pity you. You are actually poor, blind, and lacking clothes. **18**I advise you to get everything from me that

you need, as if you were buying pure gold from me that would make you truly rich. Let me make you righteous, as if you were buying white garments from me so that you could be wearing clothes instead of being shamefully naked. Let me help you to understand the truth, as if you were buying eye salve from me to put on your sick eyes so that you could see. **19**I carefully discipline everyone I love. So sincerely change your behavior. **20**Pay attention! I am urging each one of you to love me genuinely, as if I were standing at the door of your house and knocking to get you to open it. If anyone responds to me by loving me, I will become his dear friend. It will be as if he heard me calling from his door and he opened it and I came into his house and we ate a meal together. **21**I have been victorious and now rule with my Father. In the same way, I will permit everyone who is victorious to rule with me. **22**Everyone who is spiritually discerning should pay attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the groups of believers.”””

Chapter 4

1After these things, I, John, saw something remarkable: a door open in heaven! The one who had spoken to me previously, whose voice had been like a loud trumpet, spoke to me again. He said, “Come up here! I will show you events that must happen later.” **2**At once the Holy Spirit inspired me so that I could see and hear things in a vision. I saw something remarkable: A throne was there in heaven and someone was sitting on that throne. **3**The ruler who sat on the throne shone like a bright red jasper gem and like an orange carnelian gem. Around the throne a rainbow was shining like a brilliant green emerald gem. **4**Around the throne there were 24 other thrones. On those thrones 24 elders were sitting. They were wearing pure white garments and they had golden crowns on their heads. **5**Flashes of lightning and peals of thunder came out from the throne. In front of the throne, seven torches were burning. These torches represented the seven spirits of God. **6**In front of the throne there was also something that looked like a sea made of glass. It was clear like crystal. A living creature stood on each of the four sides of the throne. Eyes covered each creature, all around its body. **7**The first living creature resembled a lion. The second living creature resembled a bull. The third living creature had a face like that of a human being. The fourth living creature resembled a flying eagle. **8**Each of the four living creatures had six wings. Eyes completely covered these living creatures. All the time, without stopping, they say: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God who rules over everything and everyone. He is the one who has always existed, who exists now, and who will come {and judge everyone} in the future.” **9-10**The living beings repeatedly praise, honor, and thank God, who sits upon the throne and who lives forever. When they do, the 24 elders also kneel before God at his throne. They bow down to God, who lives forever. They place their crowns in front of his throne and they say, **11**“God our Lord, you deserve to have all creatures glorify you and honor you and acknowledge how powerful you are. You deserve this because you created everything. Yes, everything exists just as you determined to create it.”

Chapter 5

1Then I saw that the person who was sitting on the throne was holding a scroll in his right hand. He had written words on both sides of the scroll. But he had then sealed the scroll shut with seven pieces of wax{, so no one could read what he had written}. **2**I saw a powerful angel who was asking in a loud voice: “Who is the person who qualifies to break open the pieces of wax on the scroll and then unroll the scroll {and read what it says}?” **3**Yet no heavenly being, no person on the earth, and no one in the abode of the dead was sufficiently worthy to open the scroll and read it. **4**When I saw that no one anywhere was sufficiently worthy to open the scroll and read it, I wept bitterly. {I wept because I knew that what God had written was important, but I thought that no one would ever find out what he had written}. **5**But one of the elders said to me, “You do not need to weep! Here is the person we are looking for! He is the {person whom the prophets described as the} Lion from the tribe of Judah and as a branch that would grow from David’s roots. He is victorious! Therefore, he is {sufficiently} worthy to break open the seven pieces of wax on the scroll and open the scroll!” **6**Then I saw that a lamb was standing by the throne. The four living beings and the elders surrounded him. He was alive, but he had marks that showed that others had once killed him violently. He had seven horns. He also had seven eyes. Those are the seven spirits of God that God sends throughout all the world. **7**The Lamb came up to the throne, and the person who was sitting on the throne

handed the scroll to him. [8]As soon as {the Lamb} accepted the scroll, the four living beings and the 24 elders knelt down in front of the Lamb. The elders each held a harp and some golden bowls that contained incense. The incense symbolized the prayers of people who belong to God. [9]The living beings and the elders sang a song that no one had ever sung before. They sang {to the Lamb}, "You deserve to receive this scroll and to break open its pieces of wax {so that you can read what it says}. {You deserve this} because when you gave up your life, you paid with your own blood to set people free from sin so that they could worship and obey God. You did this for people all over the world. [10]You have caused them to become people over whom our God rules and to become people who will lead others to worship God. They will be rulers of the people who live in the world." [11]As I was seeing {these events}, I heard many angels singing. These angels surrounded the throne, the living beings, and the elders. There were millions of angels, so many that no one could count how many there were. [12]The angels were singing loudly, "The Lamb who gave up his life deserves for everyone to honor, glorify, and bless him and acknowledge how powerful, wealthy, wise, and strong he is!" [13]Then I also heard every creature that exists in heaven, on the earth, underneath the earth, and in the sea—yes, every creature in all of those places—singing, "May everyone forever praise and honor and glorify the one sitting on the throne and the Lamb and acknowledge how powerful they are!" [14]When the millions of angels and every creature sang these things, the four living beings said, "So be it!" Then the elders knelt down on the ground in front of both God and the Lamb to worship them.

Chapter 6

[1]Then I saw the Lamb open the first of the seven pieces of wax that sealed the scroll. When he did, I heard one of the four living beings say as loudly as a clap of thunder, "Come forth!" [2]Then I saw something remarkable: a white horse whose rider was holding a bow {and arrows}! God gave him a crown {to wear in recognition of the victories he was going to win}. The rider went out from heaven fully capable to fight and defeat God's enemies. [3]Then the Lamb opened the second piece of wax that sealed the scroll. When he did, I heard the second living being say, "Come forth!" [4]Then another horse appeared. It was bright red. There was also a rider sitting on that horse. God gave the rider the power to cause wars on the earth. That way the world's people would kill each other. For this purpose, God gave the rider on the bright red horse a huge sword. [5]The Lamb then opened the third piece of wax that sealed the scroll. When he did, I heard the third living being say, "Come forth!" I then saw something else remarkable: a black horse whose rider was holding a pair of balance scales! [6]Then I heard a sound like a voice coming from among the four living beings. It said, "Make wheat so scarce that a person will have to work an entire day to earn enough money to buy one liter of it. Also make barley so scarce that a person will have to work an entire day to earn enough money to buy three liters of it. However, make sure that olive oil and wine remain so plentiful that their prices do not increase." [7]The Lamb then opened the fourth piece of wax that sealed the scroll. When he did, I next heard the fourth living being say, "Come forth!" [8]I then saw something else remarkable: a horse that was pale because it was diseased and that had two riders. The name of the first rider was The One Who Causes People to Die. The name of the rider sitting behind him on the horse was The Place Where Dead People Go. God gave these riders the power to kill a quarter of all the people in the world. They could kill them by causing wars or famine or epidemics or by making wild animals come into populated areas and kill people. [9]The Lamb then opened the fifth piece of wax that sealed the scroll. When he did, I saw, at the base of an altar in heaven, the souls of people whom others had killed because they spoke God's message faithfully as reliable witnesses. [10]These souls called out {to God} loudly, "You, Master, always do what is right and decide what is right! So please condemn and punish the people on the earth who killed us!" [11]Then God gave each of them a white flowing robe. God told them to be patient a little longer, because there were others who were also going to die rather than deny their faith in Jesus. But as soon as all of them had died, God would punish the people who had killed them and had killed the people whose souls were now in heaven. [12]Then I saw the Lamb open the sixth piece of wax that sealed the scroll. When he did, the earth shook violently. The sun turned very dark, like mourning cloth woven from black goat hair. The moon was full and it became as red as blood. [13]Then the stars fell from the sky down to the earth. They fell just as figs left on a fig tree all fall off when the tree shakes in a very strong wind. [14]The sky split open and rolled away in both directions, just as a scroll rolls away in both directions if it splits in two. All the mountains and islands also moved out of their places. [15]Then all the people on earth, even kings, high-ranking officials, military officers, rich people, and influential individuals, hid within caves and mountain rocks. [16]They told the mountains and rocks, "Fall

on us and cover us! That way God, who sits on the throne in heaven, will not be able to see us! And that way the Lamb will not be able to punish us!" **17**For today is the terrible day on which God and the Lamb will punish people who have done wrong, and we know that none of us are innocent!"

Chapter 7

1After these events I saw four angels standing on the earth. One was standing to the north of me, one to the east, one to the south, and one to the west. They were keeping the winds from those directions from blowing on the land or on the sea or against any tree. **2**Then I saw another angel coming towards me from the east. This angel was holding a tool that would create the mark of the only true God. This angel called out loudly to the four angels whom God had allowed to keep the winds from blowing on the land and the sea. **3**The angel told {the other four angels}, "Wait, first we must mark the people who believe in and obey our God with a seal on their foreheads. Until then, do not keep the winds from blowing on the land or the sea or any tree." **4**{Then the angel and his fellow angels marked all of the people who believed in and obeyed God.} I heard someone say how many people they had marked. It was 144, 000 people from every tribe of Israel. **5**The angels marked 12, 000 people from the tribe of Judah with a seal. {They also marked} 12, 000 people from the tribe of Reuben. From the tribe of Gad {they also marked} 12, 000 people. **6**{The angels marked} 12, 000 people from the tribe of Asher with a seal. {They also marked} 12, 000 people from the tribe of Naphtali. From the tribe of Manasseh {they also marked} 12, 000 people. **7**{The angels marked} 12, 000 people from the tribe of Simeon with a seal. {They also marked} 12, 000 people from the tribe of Levi. From the tribe of Issachar {they also marked} 12, 000 people. **8**{The angels marked} 12, 000 people from the tribe of Zebulun with a seal. {They also marked} 12, 000 people from the tribe of Joseph. From the tribe of Benjamin they also marked 12, 000 people with a seal. **9**After these events, I saw something remarkable: a huge crowd of people! There were so many people in the crowd that no one could count them. They came from every nation, tribe, and people group, and they spoke every language. They all stood in front of the throne, where the Lamb was. They all wore flowing white robes, and they were all holding palm branches. **10**They were shouting loudly, "Our God, who rules over everything, has saved us! The Lamb has saved us!" **11**Then all the angels stood around the throne, the elders, and the four living beings. The angels all knelt down in front of the throne with their faces on the ground and worshiped God. **12**The angels all said, "Yes, may it be so! We praise, glorify, thank, and honor you, our God, forever! We proclaim forever that you are wise, powerful, and strong! May it be so!" **13**One of the elders then said to me, "I want to make sure you know who these people are who are wearing white flowing robes and where they have come from." **14**I answered him, "Sir, I need you to tell me who they are." He then told me: "These are the people who remained faithful to Jesus during a time of great persecution. This showed that they have become pure from sin by trusting in Jesus, who shed his blood for them when he died on the cross. **15**Therefore, they remain in front of God's throne. They worship God inside his temple without stopping. God, the one who rules from the throne in heaven, will protect them. **16**God will make sure that they always have enough food to eat. God will also make sure that they always have enough to drink. The rays of the sun will never again burn them. The heat from the sun will never again exhaust them. **17**This is because the Lamb who is by the throne will care for them just as a shepherd cares for his sheep. The Lamb will enable them to receive everlasting life, as if they were drinking from springs where fresh, pure water flows. God will help them to stop crying and be joyful."

Chapter 8

1Then the Lamb opened the seventh piece of wax that sealed the scroll. When he did, there was no sound at all in heaven for a short time. **2**I then saw the seven angels who are God's personal attendants. He gave each of them a trumpet. **3**Another angel then came and stood at the altar. He had a golden bowl for burning incense. God gave him a large quantity of incense to offer with the prayers of all God's people on the golden altar in front of God's throne. **4**{The angel started burning the incense.} The smoke from the incense burning in the container that the angel was holding went up to God along with the prayers of God's people. **5**Then the angel took the golden incense bowl and filled it with coals of fire from the altar. He threw these coals and the burning incense onto the earth. When he did, thunder crashed and rumbled, lightning flashed, and the earth shook.

6Then the seven angels, each of whom had one of the seven trumpets, got ready to blow them. **7**Then the first angel blew his trumpet, and hail and fire appeared. There was blood in the midst of the hail and fire. All of it poured down onto the earth. The fire burned up one third of everything on the surface of the land, one third of the trees, and all the green grass. **8**Then the second angel blew his trumpet, and something that was like a huge mountain that was on fire fell into the ocean. As a result, one third of the ocean became blood, **9**one third of the living creatures in the ocean died, and one third of the ships in the ocean sank **10**Then the third angel blew his trumpet, and a huge star fell from the sky. The star was blazing as if it were on fire. Parts of the star fell into one third of the rivers and into {one third of} the springs of water on earth. **11**The name of the star is Bitterness. When it fell into one third of the rivers and springs, their water became poisonous. Many people died from drinking that poisonous water. **12**Then the fourth angel blew his trumpet, and God struck the sun, the moon, and the stars so that they lost their light for one third of the time. The sun did not shine during one third of the day, and the moon and stars did not shine during one third of the night.

13Then, as I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying high in the sky shouting loudly, “Three terrible things will happen to the people who live on the earth when the three remaining angels blow their trumpets! They are about to blow them!”

Chapter 9

1Then the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. God gave it the key to the deep, dark pit. **2**When he opened that pit, a huge amount of smoke rose from it, as if it were a great burning furnace. The smoke prevented anyone from seeing the light of the sun and the sky. **3**Then locusts came out of the smoke and started swarming the earth. God gave these locusts the power to sting people just as scorpions sting people. **4**God told the locusts that they should not eat up all the grass on the ground and all the plants and all the leaves on the trees {as locusts usually do}. God told the locusts just to sting the people who did not have the mark on their foreheads that showed they belonged to God. **5**God did not allow the locusts to kill those people. Instead, the locusts kept torturing people for five months. The pain those people felt was like the pain that a scorpion causes when it stings someone. **6**During the time when the locusts torture people who refuse to belong to God, those people {will be in so much pain that they} will want to die. But God will make sure those people stay alive {to experience the punishment for their sin}. **7**The locusts looked like horses that were ready for battle. They had what looked like golden crowns on their heads. Their faces were like human faces. **8**They had long hair like women’s long hair. Their teeth were as strong as lions’ teeth. **9**They wore breastplates made of metal. When they were flying, their wings made a noise like the roar of many horses pulling chariots and rushing into battle. **10**They had tails like the tails of scorpions. With these tails they could sting people. Their power to harm people during those five months was in their tails. **11**The king who ruled over them was the angel of the deep, dark pit. His name in the Hebrew language is Abaddon. In the Greek language it is Apollyon. Both of these names mean Destroyer.

12{After five months the locusts went away.} That ended the first terrible event. But be aware that two more terrible events are still to come.

13Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four corners of the golden altar that is in God’s presence. **14**The voice was saying to the sixth angel, the one who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels whom I have bound at the great river Euphrates.” **15**Then those four angels went free. They had been waiting for that exact moment. They went free so they could enable their soldiers to kill one third of humanity. **16**I heard someone say how many soldiers there were riding on horses. The number was 200, 000, 000. **17**In the vision I saw what the horses and the soldiers who rode them looked like. The soldiers wore breastplates that were red like fire, blue like sapphire, and yellow like sulfur. The heads of the horses were like the heads of lions. From their mouths came fire, smoke, and fumes of burning sulfur. **18**Those three things—the fire, the smoke, and the burning sulfur from the horses’ mouths—killed one third of humanity. **19**But the power of the horses was also in their tails, as well as in their mouths. Their tails were like snakes, and they had heads that bit people. **20**But there were still people

whom the plagues of fire and smoke and burning sulfur did not kill. Those people did not stop doing sinful things. They also did not stop worshiping demons and idols that they had made of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood. The people did not stop worshiping the idols even though they were lifeless statues that could not help people. **21**They also did not stop murdering other people, practicing sorcery, acting in sexually immoral ways, and stealing things.

Chapter 10

1Then in the vision I saw another mighty angel come down out of heaven. A cloud surrounded him. There was a rainbow over his head. His face shone brightly like the sun. His legs glowed like columns of fire. **2**He had in his hand a small scroll that was open. He set his right foot on the ocean and his left foot on the land. **3**He shouted something in a voice as loud as the roar of a lion. As he shouted, I heard seven thunderclaps. {In the thunder were words that I could understand.} **4**I was about to record what the thunders had said. But then a voice from heaven told me, “Keep secret what the thunders said! Do not write it down!” **5**Then the angel whom I had seen standing on the ocean and the land raised his right hand toward heaven {in order to swear an oath}. **6**He asked God, who lives forever and who created everything that exists, to confirm that what he said was true. The angel said that God would no longer delay in doing what he had planned to do. **7**He said that when the time came for the seventh angel to blow his trumpet, then God would finish his secret plan. That is what God told his servants the prophets long ago.

8Then the one whom I had heard speak from heaven spoke to me again. He said, “Go and take the open scroll from the hand of the angel who is standing on the ocean and on the land.” **9**So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, “Take it and eat it. When you eat it, it will taste sweet like honey, but after you eat it, your stomach will hurt.” **10**So I took the little scroll from the angel’s hand and ate it. When I ate it, it tasted sweet like honey, but after I ate it, my stomach hurt. **11**Then someone said to me, “You must speak God’s messages again about many nations, many people groups, speakers of many languages, and many kings.”

Chapter 11

1Then an angel gave me a reed similar to a measuring stick. God said to me, “Go to my temple, measure it and the altar in it, and count the people who are worshiping there. **2**But do not measure the courtyard outside of the temple building. I have given that to the non-Jewish people groups. As a result, they will oppress the people who live in the city of Jerusalem for 42 months. **3**I will send two witnesses to announce what I reveal to them for 1, 260 days. They will show they are sad about the people’s sin by wearing rough clothes that someone has woven from goat hair.” **4**Those witnesses are the ones whom the two olive trees and the two lampstands represent. Those trees and lampstands are in the presence of the Lord, who rules the earth. **5**Now if anyone tries to harm those witnesses, they breathe fire out of their mouths and burn them up. In this way the two witnesses will certainly kill anyone who wants to harm them. **6**Those witnesses will have the authority to command no rain to fall from the sky during the time that they are announcing what God reveals to them. They also will have the authority to cause the water in lakes and streams to become blood. They will also have the authority to make many kinds of plagues happen on the earth. They will do these things when they sense that this will emphasize their message from God. **7**But when they have finished announcing their message from God, the beast that comes up from the deep, dark pit will attack them. The beast will defeat them and kill them. **8**Now the two witnesses were announcing God’s message in the great city that people symbolically call Sodom because its people are very evil. People also call that city Egypt because its people treat God’s people badly. That is also the city where Jesus, whom the witnesses were serving, died on a cross. To insult the witnesses, the people of the city will not bury their bodies. They will leave their bodies lying in the city’s open area. **9**Individuals from many people groups, tribes, language groups, and nations will look at those dead bodies for three and a half days. But the people of the city will not allow anyone to bury those bodies. **10**When the people who do not honor God see that the witnesses are dead, they will be very glad and hold a celebration. They will even send gifts to each other to celebrate. They will be so happy because the two prophets

are dead who sent plagues that made them suffer. **11**But after three and a half days, God will make them alive again. They will stop lying dead and stand up! The people who see them alive again will be terrified. **12**Then the two witnesses will hear a loud voice from heaven saying to them: “Come up here!” Then they will go up into heaven in a cloud. Their enemies will watch them go up. **13**At that same time there will be a great earthquake, as a result of which a tenth of the buildings in the city will collapse. That will kill 7, 000 people. The rest of the people will become very afraid and acknowledge that the true God had justly punished them for killing the witnesses.

14That will be the second terrible event. Be aware that the third terrible event will happen soon afterwards.

15Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and voices in heaven shouted loudly, “The Lord our God and the Messiah whom he has appointed will now rule all the people in the world! They will continue to rule those people forever!” **16**The 24 elders who sit on thrones around God’s throne bowed down with their faces on the ground and worshiped him. **17**They said:

“Lord God, you are the one who rules over everything!

You are the one who exists now!

You are the one who has always existed!

We thank you that you have so powerfully defeated

everyone who has rebelled against you,

and you now rule over all the people in the world.

18The unbelieving people of the nations were raging angrily at you.

As a result, you have punished them.

You have decided that this is the right time for you to judge all those who have died.

You are rewarding your servants who spoke your message and the people who belong to you,

You are rewarding all those who honor you,

whoever they are.

You have decided that it is time for you to destroy the people who have been destroying the earth.”

19Then God opened the doors his temple in heaven, and in it I saw the sacred chest that contains symbols of God’s promise. Lightning was flashing. I heard the rumbling of thunder. The earth shook, and large hailstones fell from the sky.

Chapter 12

1Then something very significant appeared in the sky. It was a woman who was wearing the sun as her clothing. She was standing on the moon. On her head was a crown that was made of 12 stars. **2**She was about to have a baby. She was screaming in pain because it was so difficult to deliver her baby. **3**Then something else significant appeared in the sky. It was a huge red dragon. It had seven heads and ten horns. It had a royal crown on each of its heads. **4**The dragon’s tail dragged a third of the stars out of the sky and threw them onto the earth. The dragon set himself in front of the woman who was about to give birth so that he could eat her child as soon as he was born. **5**Then the woman gave birth to a son. He is destined to rule all groups of people with complete authority. God snatched away this child {for safety} and brought him up to his throne in heaven. **6**But the woman fled to a desolate region. God had made a place ready for her there where people would take care of her for 1, 260 days.

7Then a battle began in heaven. Michael and the angels he commanded fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back {against Michael and his angels}. **8**But the dragon lost the battle, and God did not allow the dragon and his angels to stay in heaven after that. **9**Instead, God threw the huge dragon out of heaven. That dragon is the same evil spirit who appeared as a serpent long ago. His names are the Devil and Satan. He deceives everyone who lives in the world. God threw him and all of his angels down to the earth. **10**Then I heard someone in heaven shout loudly,

“Now our God has saved his people by his power, and he rules all people!

Now his Messiah has begun to rule!

This is because God has thrown the accuser of our fellow believers out of heaven.

He was continually coming to God and accusing believers of doing wrong things.

11But our fellow believers overcame him. This is because the Lamb shed his blood as a sacrifice for them

and because they spoke the truth about him to other people.

They did not want just to stay alive.

They were willing to die if necessary for speaking the truth about him.

12So all of you living in heaven should rejoice!

But terrible things will happen to you people who live on the earth and travel on the ocean because the devil is now among you.

He is very angry because he knows that he has only a short time before God judges and punishes him.”

13When the dragon realized that God had thrown him down to the earth, he tried to attack the woman who had given birth to a son. **14**But God gave the woman two wings like the wings of a very large eagle. These enabled her to fly away to a desolate region. God had prepared a safe place for her there. In that place, God took care of her for three and one-half years. The serpent{, that is, the dragon,} was not able to reach her there. **15**Then the serpent poured a flood of water out of his mouth toward the woman. He was trying to sweep her away with the water. **16**But the ground helped the woman. The ground opened up a big hole and the flood that the dragon poured out from his mouth went down into the hole. **17**Then the dragon was very angry with the woman, so he went away to fight against the rest of her children. They are the people who obey God’s commandments and who speak the truth about Jesus. **18**Then the dragon stood on the ocean shore.

Chapter 13

1Then I saw a beast come up out of the ocean. It had ten horns and seven heads. On each of its horns there was a royal crown. On each of its heads there was a name that insulted God. **2**This beast was like a leopard, but its feet were like the feet of a bear. Its mouth was like the mouth of a lion. The dragon made the beast very powerful. He also gave him the supreme right to rule over people as their king. **3**One of the heads of the beast looked as if someone had wounded it so that it had died. But that wound had healed. As a result, all the people of the earth marveled at the beast and obeyed it. **4**They worshiped the dragon because he had given the beast authority to rule over them. They also worshiped the beast. They said, “No one is as powerful as the beast! No one could ever fight against it!” **5**The dragon enabled the beast to speak proudly and to insult God. The dragon also enabled it to rule the people on earth. But God would only allow the beast to rule for 42 months. **6**When the beast spoke, it insulted God. It said that God was not really like what people believed him to be like. The beast also insulted the people in heaven among whom God lives. **7**The dragon enabled the beast to fight against God’s people and conquer them. The dragon also gave the beast the right to rule over people no matter what tribe they came from or what group

they belonged to or what language they spoke or where they lived. **8**The names of some of the people living on earth do not appear in the Book of Life. Those people will worship the beast. The Book of Life belongs to the Lamb. The Lamb gave up his life at the beginning of the world in order to become the Savior. **9**Everyone who wants to understand must listen carefully to this message from God. **10**If anyone's enemies are going to capture him, they will capture him. If anyone's enemies are going to kill him with a sword, they will kill him with a sword. So God's people must endure suffering and remain faithful to him.

11Then I saw another beast come up from the earth. It had two small horns on its head as a sheep has. But its voice sounded like a dragon's voice. **12**This beast from the earth carries out all the orders of the beast from the sea. It requires the people who live on the earth to worship the beast from the sea. That is the beast that almost died but whose wound healed. **13**The beast from the earth also did amazing miracles. It even caused fire to fall from the sky onto the earth while people watched. **14**The dragon gave the beast from the earth the power to do these miracles on behalf of the beast from the sea. The beast from the earth used the miracles to deceive the people who live on the earth. It told them to make an idol that looked like the beast from the sea. That was the beast that survived a sword wound that seemed to kill it. **15**The dragon gave the beast from the earth the power to make that idol live. Then the idol that looked like the beast from the sea was able to speak. The beast from the earth then commanded that anyone who refused to worship the idol would be killed. **16**The beast from the earth also required each person to have a mark on his right hand or on his forehead. This requirement applied to important people and unimportant people. It applied to people who were rich and people who were poor. It applied to free people and to slaves. It applied to everyone! **17**Then the beast from the earth ordered that no one could buy or sell anything if he did not have this mark. This mark was the name of the beast from the sea or the number that stood for its name. **18**You must think wisely about this: Anyone who understands things well can figure out the identity of the beast from the sea. That is because the number that stands for its name actually represents the name of a man. That number is 666.

Chapter 14

1But then I saw the Lamb standing on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. With him were 144, 000 people. He had written his name and his Father's name on their foreheads. **2**I also heard a sound from heaven. It was as loud as the sound of a huge waterfall or of mighty thunder. It also sounded like many people playing on harps. **3**This sound was of the people I saw singing a new song. They were standing in front of the throne and the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had saved these 144, 000 people from among all the people on the earth. Only they could learn that song. **4**Those 144, 000 people are spiritually pure, as virgins are morally pure. They have not made themselves impure by worshiping any false god. They are the ones who accompany Jesus, the one who is like a lamb, wherever he goes. They represent all those whom he has saved so far from among the people of the earth. Those who have believed in Jesus will share their faith and lead many others to believe in God and Jesus. **5**These people never denied Jesus. They always lived pure lives.

6Then I saw another angel flying through the sky. He was bringing God's eternal good news from heaven so that he could proclaim it to the people who live on earth. He will proclaim it to every nation, to every tribe, to speakers of every language, and to every people group. **7**He said in a loud voice, "Honor God and praise him because it is now time for him to judge everyone! Worship him because he is the one who created heaven and earth and the ocean and the fresh water." **8**And then another angel came after that one. This angel said, "The very evil city of Babylon has now become a complete ruin! Babylon forced the people of every nation to be unfaithful to God by worshiping idols. **9**Yet another angel came afterward. This angel said in a loud voice, "If people worship the beast and its image or allow someone to put its mark on their foreheads or on their hands, **10**God will duly punish them. They will stagger from the punishment as if they had drunk strong wine. He will torment them in burning sulfur as his holy angels and the Lamb are watching. **11**The smoke from the fire that torments them will rise forever. God will torment them all the time without stopping. This is what will happen to the people who worship the beast and its image or who allow someone to write its name on them." **12**God's people are those who obey what God commands and who trust in Jesus. They must continue to do these things faithfully {because those who disobey God and deny

Jesus will experience these torments}. **13**Then I heard someone speaking from heaven and saying, “Write this: How fortunate from now on are those who die as faithful believers in Jesus.” The Holy Spirit says, “Yes, after they die, they will no longer have to endure suffering. Instead, it will be clear that they were doing the right things.”

14Then I saw something else very significant. I saw a white cloud, and someone was sitting on the cloud who looked like a human being. He was wearing a golden crown on his head. He held a sharp sickle in his hand. **15**Still another angel came out of the temple in heaven. In a loud voice, he said to the one who was sitting on the cloud, “The grain on the earth is ripe. So this is the time to reap it. So use your sickle to reap the grain.” **16**Then the person who looked like a human being and who was sitting on the cloud used his sickle to harvest all of the grain on the earth. **17**Another angel then came out of the heavenly sanctuary. This angel was also holding a sharp sickle. **18**One more angel came from the altar. He is the one who takes care of the fire of the altar. He said in a loud voice to the angel who was holding the sickle, “The grapes on the earth are ripe! So use your sickle to cut the bunches of grapes off of the earth’s grapevines. Then collect those bunches of grapes.” **19**So the angel used his sickle to harvest the grapes. Then he threw the grapes into the huge winepress that represents the place where God will punish people for what they have done wrong. **20**God trampled the grapes in the winepress outside the city. When he did, blood poured out of the winepress! It flowed in such quantity that it formed a stream that was a meter and a half deep and extended for three hundred kilometers.

Chapter 15

1Then something else very significant appeared in the sky. I saw seven angels. God had given them the duty to punish rebellious people in seven different ways. This is the last time that God will punish people this way, because through these punishments he will have given people on earth all of the punishment that they deserve.

2I also saw a great flat area of glass that was sparkling with light. I also saw the people who had overcome the beast by not worshiping it or its image and by not allowing anyone to mark them with the number that represents the beast’s name. They were standing on the large flat area of glass. They were holding harps that God had given them. **3**They were singing a song such as God’s servant Moses sang long ago. It was the same kind of song that the Lamb now sings. They sang,

“Lord God, who rules over everything,

all that you do is very marvelous!

You always act entirely righteously.

You rule as King forever!

4O Lord, everyone will fear you and honor you because you alone are holy.

Yes, people from every group will come and bow down to you in worship

because you have shown that you have judged everyone in the right way.”

5Then, after that, I saw that the doors of the temple in heaven were open. That heavenly temple was like the tent on earth that had held the sacred chest. **6**The seven angels whose duty it was to punish rebellious people in seven different ways came out of the temple. The angels were wearing clean, white linen garments. They were also wearing bands of golden fabric around their chests. **7**One of the four living creatures gave each of the seven angels a golden bowl. Inside each bowl was a different kind of punishment for people who had done wrong. The angels would administer these punishments on behalf of God, who lives forever and ever. **8**Then smoke that expressed the presence of the glorious and all-powerful God filled the temple. {The smoke remained there while the angels were administering the plagues.} Only after the seven angels finished punishing the people of the earth in seven different ways could anyone enter the temple again.

Chapter 16

1Next I heard someone in the temple speak in a loud voice to the angels who had the seven bowls. He told them,
“Go from here and pour out what you have in your seven bowls onto the earth. This is how God will punish people
for their sins.” **2**So the first angel went and poured out what he had in his bowl onto the earth. As a result, terrible
sores broke out on the people who had allowed the beast’s servants to write the beast’s name on them. These were
the people who had worshiped the beast’s image. **3**Then the second angel poured out what he had in his bowl on
the ocean. As a result, the water of the sea turned into blood. That blood was decayed and stinky like the blood of a
dead person. Every creature that lived in the ocean died. **4**Then the third angel poured out what he had in his bowl
upon the earth’s rivers and springs. As a result, the water in them turned into blood. **5**Then I heard the angel who
was in charge of those waters say to God, “O God, you exist and have always existed. You are supremely holy. You
are a fair judge of people. **6**The people who rebelled against you murdered your holy people and the prophets. So
you are just in punishing them by giving them blood to drink.” **7**Then I heard the altar answer, “Yes, Lord God, you
who rule over everything, you punish people completely fairly.” **8**Then the fourth angel poured out what he had in
his bowl on the sun. As a result, the sun became so hot that it burned people very badly. **9**Because the sun burned
people so badly, they said evil things about God because he had the power to punish them in these ways. But they
still refused to stop doing wrong things and they still refused to praise him.

10Then the fifth angel poured out what he had in his bowl on the throne of the beast. As a result, it became dark
where the beast ruled. {Because it was like night all the time, the people whom the beast ruled could feel the pain
of their terrible sores even more.} So they were biting their tongues because of this pain. **11**They also said evil
things about God who rules in heaven because their sores were so painful. But they refused to stop doing wrong
things. **12**Then the sixth angel poured out what he had in his bowl on the Euphrates River. As a result, the water in
the river dried up so that the rulers from the eastern countries could cross it with their armies. **13**Then I saw three
evil spirits that looked like frogs. One came out of the mouth of the dragon. One came out of the mouth of the
beast. And one came out of the mouth of the false prophet. **14**Now those spirits were demons that were able to do
miracles. They went out to the rulers of the entire earth to gather their armies. Those armies will fight a battle on
the important day when Almighty God punishes his enemies. **15**(I heard the Lord Jesus say, “You must listen
carefully to me: I am coming unexpectedly, like a thief. It will be good for people who stay alert and keep on living
in the right way. They will not feel shame when I return. They will be just like a person who keeps his clothes on so
that he does not feel shame in front of other people.”) **16**The evil spirits gathered the rulers at a place whose name
in the Hebrew language is Armageddon.

17Then the seventh angel poured what he had in his bowl into the air. As a result, someone said with a loud voice
from the throne in the temple, “God has now finished punishing rebellious people.” **18**Then lightning flashed,
thunder rumbled, and the earth shook violently. There had not been such a powerful earthquake during the whole
time that people have lived on the earth. **19**As a result of this earthquake, the giant city split into three parts. God
also destroyed the cities in the other nations. God did not forget that the people of Babylon had sinned very much.
So he made them experience the punishments they so justly deserved. **20**Also as a result of the earthquake, every
island disappeared, and the mountains became flat land. **21**Then huge hailstones, each weighing 33 kilograms, fell
from the sky onto people. Then people said evil things about God because he had punished them in this terrible
way with those huge, heavy hailstones.

Chapter 17

1One of the seven angels who had the bowls came over to me. He said, “Come with me. I want to show you how
God will punish the evil prostitute whom you saw sitting near a great river. **2**The kings of the earth have worshiped
the idols she wanted them to worship. The people they rule have also worshiped those idols. It was as if they had
gotten drunk on wine that she gave them.”

3Then the Holy Spirit inspired me so that I could see and hear things in a vision. The angel carried me away to a desolate area. There I saw a woman who was riding on a red beast. The beast had written names all over itself. They were names that insulted God. The beast had seven heads and ten horns. **4**Now the woman was wearing purple and red clothes. She had gold jewelry with precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand. That cup was full of something to drink that stands for the awful things she does when she commits sexual immorality. **5**And there was a name in writing on her forehead. The name had a secret meaning. That name was: The Great Babylon, the Mother of Prostitutes and of the Immoral Things in the World. **6**I saw that the woman had become drunk because she had drunk the blood of God's people. Those people had suffered for proclaiming the truth about Jesus. When I saw her, that astonished me completely.

7The angel said to me, "This should not astonish you. I will explain to you the hidden meaning of the woman and of the beast on which she rides. That beast has seven heads and ten horns. **8**The beast that you saw lived previously. Now he is no longer alive. But he is about to come back up from the deep, dark pit. Eventually God will destroy him. But this beast will appear again after having lived previously and then dying. Seeing him will astonish the people on the earth whose names God did not write in the Book of Life before he created the world. **9**People need to think wisely to understand this: The seven heads of the beast that the woman is riding represent seven hills. Those are the seven hills of the city that the woman represents. The heads also represent seven rulers. **10**Five of those rulers have died. One is still alive. The seventh ruler has not yet come. And when he comes, he will rule for only a short time. **11**The beast that lived previously and then was not alive will be an eighth ruler. He is actually one of those seven rulers. God will certainly destroy him. **12**Now the ten horns that you saw represent ten rulers who have not yet begun to rule. But they will rule people together with the beast, though only for a short time. **13**Those rulers will all agree to do the same thing. As a result, they will give the beast their power to rule. **14**The rulers and the beast will fight against the Lamb. He will defeat them because he is the Lord who rules over all other lords and the King who rules over all other kings. The people who are with him are the ones whom God has chosen and called to himself and who keep serving him faithfully." **15**Then the angel said to me, "The waters that you saw in the city where the prostitute sits represent a large number of people from many different backgrounds. **16**And the ten horns that you saw represent rulers. They and the beast will hate the prostitute. So they will plunder the city and leave nothing in it. Then they will destroy the city the way a wild animal devours another animal. They will burn down the city completely. **17**They will do that because God has caused them to decide to do what he wants them to do. As a result, they will all agree together to let the beast have their power to rule until God has accomplished what he said. **18**And the prostitute that you saw represents the very evil city whose leaders rule over the other rulers in the world."

Chapter 18

1After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. God had given great authority to this angel. The angel was shining so brightly that he lit up the earth. **2**The angel shouted very loudly, "God is about to destroy the evil city of Babylon completely. {People will no longer live in the ruins of the city.} All kinds of evil spirits will live there. All kinds of disgusting scavenger birds will also live there. **3**God is going to destroy Babylon because that evil city influenced many people groups to devote themselves to idol worship. Babylon influenced the rulers of those groups, and they made their people worship idols. Babylon also set an example of living in luxury. This made people in other places want to live in the same way. Those who sold luxury goods made a lot of money selling the goods to those people."

4Then I heard someone else speak from heaven. He said, "My people, run away from that evil city of Babylon! If you stay there, you may sin as the people there do. And if you sin as they do, I will punish you in the same way that I will punish them. **5**Run away because the people of that evil city have sinned very greatly and God is now going to punish them for what they have done."

6{The voice from heaven told the angels whom God had assigned to punish Babylon,} "Punish the people of that city just as much as they harmed other people. In fact, cause them to suffer twice as much as they caused other

people to suffer. **7**The people of the city of Babylon honored themselves. They indulged in pleasures. To the same extent that they did that, torment them and cause them to grieve. Do that because they were confident that they would always rule other people. They were confident that they could provide themselves with everything they needed. They were confident that nothing bad would ever happen to them. **8**Because the people of Babylon are so wicked, terrible things will happen to them all at once. Some will die and others will mourn for them. People will be hungry because they will have no food. The city will burn up completely. The Lord God is able to punish her in these ways because he is mighty."

9The rulers of the peoples who live on earth worshiped idols with the people of Babylon. They indulged in pleasures with the people of Babylon. So they will mourn greatly for the city when they see it burning up. **10**Those rulers will stand far away from Babylon because they will be afraid that God will punish them too if they get too close. They will say, "How very terrible it is for the Great Babylon, that strong city! God is punishing the people who live there so quickly!" **11**And the merchants of the earth will mourn greatly for the city because no one living there will ever again buy the things that they have to sell. **12-13**They sell ornaments made of gold, silver, precious stones, and pearls. They sell expensive cloth made of fine linen and silk, expensive cloth that is dyed purple and crimson. They sell many kinds of scented wood and many kinds of items made of ivory, the most expensive wood, bronze, iron, and marble. They sell cinnamon, spices, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, olive oil, fine flour, and grain. They sell cattle, sheep, horses, and chariots. They even sell human beings as slaves. **14**Yes, the good things the people of Babylon longed to have are gone! God has punished them by destroying their many valuable possessions! They have lost those possessions permanently. **15**Many merchants earned a lot of money by selling these things. Those merchants will stand far away from Babylon because they will be afraid that God will punish them too if they get too close. They will mourn greatly **16**and they will say, "Very terrible things have happened to that great city! That city was like a woman who dressed in clothes made of fine linen and expensive cloth dyed purple and crimson and who wore gold jewelry with precious stones and pearls. **17**But God has destroyed all these expensive things so quickly!"

Every ship captain, every ship passenger, all sailors, and all others who do work involving the ocean will stand far away from the city. **18**When they see the smoke of the fire that is burning there, they will shout, "No other city has ever been like that great city!" **19**They will even throw dust on their heads {to show that they are sad}. Then they will shout in great distress, "Very terrible things have happened to Babylon. The people who lived in that city bought many expensive things, so that people who owned ships earned a lot of money by transporting those things there. God has destroyed that city so quickly!"

20Then someone spoke from heaven saying, "You who live in heaven, rejoice over what has happened to Babylon! You who are God's people, including you apostles and prophets, rejoice because God has justly punished the people of that city because they harmed you so badly!"

21Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large stone for grinding grain and he threw it into the ocean. Then he said, "God will destroy the great city of Babylon abruptly! It will disappear completely, just as that stone disappeared into the ocean! Babylon will be gone forever! **22**In that city there will never again be anyone playing harps, singing, playing flutes, or blowing trumpets. There will no longer be any skilled workers making things. There will never again be people grinding grain at the mills. **23**No lamp will ever again shine there. There will never again be the happy voices of any bridegroom and his bride. God will destroy this city because its merchants were the most important people in the world. They were so prosperous because it was as if the city used witchcraft to get every people group to live as its people did. **24**The city is also guilty of killing the prophets and others of God's people. Indeed, {because it used violence and set an example of violence,} it is guilty of every murder that people committed on the earth!"

Chapter 19

1Next I heard what sounded like a huge crowd in heaven. They were shouting,

"Hallelujah! God has saved us!

Our God is glorious and mighty!

2Praise him because he judges completely fairly!

He has punished the evil city that was like a prostitute, because the people of that city persuaded many other people to act immorally as they did.

Praise him because he has punished them for murdering his servants!”

3The crowd shouted again, saying,

“Hallelujah! The smoke of the fire that is burning that city will go up forever!”

4Then the 24 elders and the four living creatures prostrated themselves and worshiped God, who sits on the throne. They said:

“It is true! Hallelujah!”

5Then someone spoke from the throne and said,

“All of you who are his servants, praise our God!

All of you who honor him, praise him, every one of you!”

6Then I heard something like the noise of a huge crowd of people. They were making a loud sound like the sound of a huge waterfall or loud claps of thunder. They were shouting,

“Hallelujah! Our Lord God, who rules over everything, reigns!

7We should truly celebrate, and we should honor him

because now is the time for the Lamb to be united with the woman he is marrying. She has dressed for the wedding.

8God has given her clean white clothes to wear. They are fine-linen clothes.”

(That fabric represents the right things that God’s people do.)

9Then the angel said to me, “Write how fortunate the people are whom God invites to the feast when the Lamb marries his wife!” He also said to me, “God has said this, and it is true!” **10**Immediately I prostrated myself in front of the angel to worship him. But he said to me, “Do not worship me! I am just your fellow servant and the fellow servant of other believers who speak the truth about Jesus. God has sent me here to serve you by helping you understand the prophetic vision he has given you because you want to speak the truth about Jesus. God is the one you should worship!”

11Then I saw the heavens open up, and I saw something amazing: Jesus riding on a white horse! Those who truly know Jesus call him Always Trustworthy. He judges all people according to what is right, and he fights against people who do what is wrong. **12**Now his eyes shone like a burning flame. He wore many royal crowns on his head. There was a name on his clothing. Only he knows what that name means. **13**Blood covered the cloak that he was wearing. Another of his names is the Word of God. **14**The heavenly armies were following him. They were riding on white horses. They were wearing clean, white linen clothes. **15**Jesus had a sharp sword extending from his mouth. He will use it to defeat the rebellious people groups. He himself will rule them so powerfully that no one will be able to resist him. He will destroy his enemies as if they were grapes that he was crushing in a winepress. He will do this for God, who rules over everything and will punish his enemies thoroughly because of their sins. **16**A title appeared on his cloak at his thigh: “This is the King who rules over all other kings and the Lord who rules over all other lords.”

17Then I saw an angel standing in the light of the sun. He called loudly to all the flesh-eating birds flying high in the sky, “Come and gather for the large feast that God is providing for you! **18**Come and eat the flesh of God’s enemies who will die in this battle! Eat the flesh of kings, of army commanders, of people who fought powerfully, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of many other kinds of people.” **19**Then I saw the beast and the kings of earth with their armies. They had gathered together to fight against the rider on the horse and his army. **20**But the rider on the white horse captured the beast and the false prophet. The false prophet is the one who had performed miracles in the beast’s presence. By doing that he had deceived the people who had accepted the beast’s mark on their foreheads and who had worshiped its image. Then God threw the beast and the false prophet alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. **21**And the rider on the horse killed the rest of their armies with his sword, the one that extended from his mouth. Birds came and ate as much as they wanted of the flesh of the people and horses that he had killed.

Chapter 20

1Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven. He had the key to the deep, dark pit and he was carrying a large chain in his hand. **2**The angel seized the dragon. That dragon is the ancient serpent—the devil, that is, Satan. The angel bound him with the chain. That chain would hold him for a thousand years. **3**The angel threw him into the deep, dark pit. He shut the door of the pit, locked it, and sealed it to prevent anyone from opening it. He did this so that Satan would no longer deceive the many people groups until after those thousand years. At that time, God will release Satan for a short time.

4Then I saw thrones on which people were sitting. God made those people judges. I also saw the souls of other people whose enemies had killed them by cutting their heads off. Their enemies did that because they had spoken the truth from God about Jesus. I also saw the souls of other people whose enemies had not killed them but who had refused to worship the beast or its image. They had not allowed the beast’s servants to put the beast’s mark on them, either on their foreheads or on their hands. They all became alive again and they ruled with the Messiah during those thousand years. **5**These were the people who lived again the first time that God caused dead people to live again. The rest of the people who had died did not live again until after those thousand years. **6**God will be pleased with those who live again this first time. Yes, God will consider them to belong to him in a special way. They will not die a second time. Instead, they will be priests who serve God and the Messiah. They will rule with the Messiah during those thousand years.

7At the end of the thousand years, God will release Satan from the deep, dark pit. **8**Satan will go out to deceive the rebellious people groups all over the earth. {These are the nations that the prophet Ezekiel called} Gog and Magog. Satan will gather them to fight against God’s people. There will be so many of them fighting against God’s people that no one will be able to count them, just as no one can count the grains of sand on the ocean shore. **9**They will march from many places on the earth. They will surround the army of God’s people where it is in battle formation. That will be at Jerusalem, the city that God loves. But God will send fire down from heaven and it will burn up all of his enemies. **10**Then God will throw the devil, who had deceived those people, into the lake of burning sulfur. This is also where God had thrown the beast and the false prophet. As a result, they will continually suffer severely forever.

11Then I saw a huge white throne on which God was sitting. {He was so fearsome that} the land and the sky disappeared completely when he appeared. **12**Then I saw people of all kinds who had died but who were now alive again standing in front of God’s throne. God opened the books in which he records what people do. God also opened another book, the Book of Life. God writes in that book the names of people who have eternal life. God judged the people who had died and who were now alive again according to what they had done, which he had recorded in the books. **13**The people whose bodies were in the sea became alive again, and the people whose bodies were in graves on the land also became alive again. {They all stood in front of God’s throne, and} God judged each of them according to what each one had done. **14**Then God took the place where souls went after dying physically and threw that place itself into the burning lake. The burning lake is where people go when they die spiritually. **15**Then God saw whose names he had written in the book that lists the people who have eternal life. If someone’s name was not in that book, God threw him into the burning lake.

Chapter 21

1Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth had disappeared, and the oceans no longer existed. **2**I saw the city of Jerusalem, which is special to God, in a new form. It was coming down to earth from God in heaven. The city looked very beautiful, like a bride on her wedding day. **3**Then I heard a loud voice calling out from the throne of God. The voice said, “Listen to this! Now God will live right where people live! They will belong to him, and God himself will stay with them. **4**He will comfort them so that they are no longer sad. None of them will ever again die or mourn or cry or suffer pain. God has taken away those things, so they are gone forever.”

5Then God said from the throne, “Listen to this! I am now making everything new!” He also said to me, “Write these things that I have told you. You can be confident that I will certainly cause them to happen.” **6**He also said to me, “I have completed all these things! I am the one who began all things and the one who will cause all things to end. To everyone who wants it, I will freely give everlasting life, as if I were giving them a drink from a spring whose water keeps people alive. **7**I will give this to all who are victorious over Satan. And I will be their God, and they will be my children. **8**But all the others will suffer in the lake of burning sulfur. That is what it means to die a second time. Those who are cowards will suffer this way. So will those who do not believe in me, those who do detestable things, those who murder people, those who sin sexually, those who practice witchcraft, those who worship idols, and all those who tell lies.”

9Then an angel came to me. He was one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls of the wine that caused the seven last ways of suffering. He said to me, “Come with me. I will show you the people who will live together with the Lamb forever!”

10Then the Holy Spirit inspired me so that I could see and hear things in a vision. The angel took me to the top of a very high mountain. There he showed me the city that is special to God, the new Jerusalem. It was coming down out of heaven from God. **11**The city was shining with brilliant light that came from God himself. It was sparkling like a priceless jasper gemstone, and it was clear like crystal. **12**A very high wall surrounded the city. The wall had twelve gates. An angel stood at each gate. The names of the twelve tribes of Israel appeared over the gates. Each gate had the name of one tribe. **13**Three gates were on the east side of the city. Three gates were on the north side. Three gates were on the south side. And three gates were on the west side. **14**The city wall had twelve foundation stones. On each foundation stone was the name of one of the twelve apostles whom the Lamb had appointed.

15The angel who was speaking to me carried a golden measuring rod. He used it to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. **16**The city was square in shape, that is, it was as long as it was wide. After the angel measured the city with his rod, he reported that it was 2, 200 kilometers long and that its width and height were the same as its length. **17**He measured its wall and reported that it was 66 meters high. The angel used the measurement that people normally use.

18The stones of the city wall were like the green stone that people call jasper. The buildings of the city were pure gold and they showed reflections the way clear glass does. **19**The foundations of the city wall were beautiful precious stones. Each foundation was a different stone. The first foundation stone was jasper. The second foundation stone was sapphire. The third foundation stone was chalcedony. The fourth foundation stone was emerald. **20**The fifth foundation stone was sardonyx. The sixth foundation stone was carnelian. The seventh foundation stone was chrysolite. The eighth foundation stone was beryl. The ninth foundation stone was topaz. The tenth foundation stone was chrysoprase. The eleventh foundation stone was jacinth. And the twelfth foundation stone was amethyst. **21**The twelve gates of the city were each huge pearls. Each gate was a single pearl. The city streets were pure gold and they showed reflections the way clear glass does.

22There was no temple in the city. That was because the Lord God himself, who rules over all, and the Lamb were there. So there was no need for a temple. **23**Now the city will not need the sun or the moon for light, because the light coming from God and from the Lamb will be all the light that it needs. **24**The way people live in the city will be

an example to all of the world's people groups. The rulers of the earth will bring their treasures into the city to honor God and the lamb. **25**It will never be night in the city. So no one will ever shut the gates of the city as one usually does at the end of a day. **26**The people of the world will also bring their wealth into the city. **27**But nothing that is morally impure will ever enter that city. No one who does things that God considers detestable and no one who tells lies will ever enter it. Only those people whose names God has written in the book that belongs to the Lamb will be there. That is the book that lists the names of people who have everlasting life.

Chapter 22

1Then the angel showed me the river that causes people who drink from it to live forever. The water was sparkling and clear like crystal. The river was flowing out from the thrones where God and the Lamb were sitting. **2**It flowed down through the middle of the city's open area. On each side of the river was a tree with fruit that causes people who eat it to live forever. These trees produce fruit 12 times a year. They produce a crop each month. The people groups use the leaves of the trees as medicine. **3**There will never be anyone or anything there that God will curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city. God's servants will worship him there. **4**They will see him face to face, and his name will appear on their foreheads. **5**There will never again be night. God's servants will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun because the Lord God will shine his light upon them. They will rule forever.

6The angel said to me: "These things that God has shown you are true, and he will certainly make them happen. The Lord God who inspires the prophets sent his angel to show the people who serve him the events that must happen soon." **7**Jesus says to all his people, "Listen to this! I am coming soon; God will abundantly bless everyone who obeys the prophetic message in this book."

8I, John, am the one who heard and saw in a vision these things that I have written down. When I had heard and seen them, I immediately lay down in front of the angel who had shown me these things in order to worship him. **9**But he said to me, "Do not worship me! I am just a servant of God like you! I am also a servant like your fellow believers who are the prophets, and like those who obey the message in this book. Instead, worship God!" **10**He also said to me, "Do not keep secret the message about what God has foretold in this book, because it is almost time for him to fulfill this message. **11**Since that time is near, if those who act in an evil manner want to continue to act that way, let them continue to do so. If those who are vile want to continue to be vile, let them continue to do so. God will soon punish them for that. But those who are acting righteously should continue to act righteously. Those who are acting as people should who belong to God should continue to act that way."

12Jesus says to all people: "Listen! I am coming soon! And I will punish or reward everyone according to what each one has done. **13**I am the one who began all things and the one who will cause all things to end. I am before all things and I am at the end of all things. **14**God is very pleased with the people who stop living in wrong ways and start living in right ways. Because they do that, those people will be able to eat the fruit of the tree that enables people to live forever. They will be able to go through the gates into the holy city. **15**But others will not enter that city. This includes people who do wicked things, practice witchcraft, sin sexually, murder others, worship idols, or lie continually.

16I, Jesus, sent my angel to announce these things that will affect you groups of believers. Mysteriously, I am both the ancestor of King David and his descendant whom the prophets promised would come. I am the one who is like the bright morning star."

17The Holy Spirit and the people who belong to God say, "Come!" Whoever hears this should also say, "Come!" Everyone who wants everlasting life should receive it! God will give everlasting life as a free gift to everyone who desires it!

18I, John, solemnly warn everyone who hears the message about what I have foretold in this book: If anyone adds anything to this message, God will punish him in the ways that this book tells about. **19**And if anyone takes away any of the message about the things I have foretold in this book, God will take away that person's right to eat fruit

from the tree that enables people to live forever. God will also take away that person's right to enter the new Jerusalem. I describe both these things in this book.

20 Jesus, who says that all these things are true, says, "Certainly I am coming soon!" I, John, reply, "May it be so! Lord Jesus, come!"

21 I pray that our Lord Jesus will continue to act kindly to all of you who are God's people. May it be so!

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