

THE NEW TESTAMENT

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Modern Evangelical Version

*Translated by
Robert Thomas Helm*



MINDSTIR MEDIA

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INTRODUCTION

At a time when there are already many modern English Bible translations, potential readers may wonder, “Why another translation?” In response, it needs to be stated that while no Bible translation is perfect, the *Modern Evangelical Version* is unique in certain respects. Specifically, it is intended to provide a bold witness to the good news (gospel) about Jesus Christ in modern colloquial English. Hence the title—*Modern Evangelical Version*.

The word “gospel” is derived from an Anglo-Saxon term that means “good news.” But the Christian gospel is not just any good news. It is the good news about God’s action in history approximately two thousand years ago in the Person of Jesus Christ. This was an act of pure grace on God’s part—pure, undeserved kindness!

Our first human ancestors, Adam and Eve, introduced sin into the world when they disobeyed their Creator, and from this seemingly small beginning, sin has grown until it has filled the world with sorrow, misery, and death. Because of its malignant nature, God hates sin and must destroy it to keep it from ruining His creation. This is why His law pronounces a death sentence on sinners. And yet God loves guilty sinners and longs to save them from their predicament. All human beings are sinners, and God has found the entire human race guilty of high treason against His government and worthy of death. But as our rightful Judge, God became a Man (Jesus Christ) and took our death sentence on Himself. And for this reason, we can go free! All this becomes a reality if we simply take God at His word and believe the good news—the wonderful message that Jesus Christ lived a perfect life, died in our place on the cross, and rose bodily from the grave. When we believe this message, the record of Jesus’ perfect life and death stands in place of our guilty record, and God justifies us. That is, He gives us an innocent verdict in the judgment, declares us righteous, and promises us eternal life in His kingdom. We can never earn this innocent verdict by anything we do. It is received by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone!

God the Holy Spirit inspired certain men from among Jesus’ earliest followers to compile the New Testament documents as a witness to this good news. The term “New Testament” actually means “new covenant” or “new agreement.” In other words, this book that you have in your hands is the record of God’s new agreement with human beings to save them from sin and its penalty through the life and death of Jesus Christ. Originally, the New Testament was written in Koine Greek—the unpolished, colloquial language of the street in the first-century Roman Empire. The New Testament is intended to communicate with common people, and this is why the *Modern Evangelical Version* has employed the colloquial English of the twenty-first century. This version is intended to communicate the good news to the English-speaking masses.

The *Modern Evangelical Version* is based on other presuppositions as well. First, this is a conservative translation. The translator believes that the Genesis account of a six-day creation and a subsequent global flood is real history, that Adam and Eve were real people, that the Creator of the universe has intervened miraculously in human history, and that He performed His most awesome work when He quietly stepped into our world and became a Man—the Man of history, Jesus Christ. The translator also affirms the great truths of the Christian Faith: The Holy Trinity, the full Deity and full humanity of Christ, the sinless nature of Christ, Christ's substitutionary atonement on the cross, the bodily resurrection of Christ, justification by faith alone, assurance of salvation in Christ, sanctification through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and the bodily resurrection of Christ's people at His literal return in glory.

Second, this is a dynamic equivalent translation of the Greek scriptures. The term "dynamic equivalent" indicates that a literal, word for word translation is not always provided. In some instances, it has been deemed more accurate to translate basic thoughts. The translator is of the conviction that the Holy Spirit did not dictate the scriptures, word for word, to His human servants. Instead, He gave them ideas, which they conveyed in their own words. Consequently, fidelity to the sense of the text is more important than a wooden, overly literal translation.

Third, the translator favors what is sometimes called "conditionalism"—the idea that immortality and eternal life are conditional on faith in Christ and are not found in a never-dying soul that is somehow imprisoned within the human body. Increasingly, biblical scholarship is recognizing that the traditional concept of the immortality of the soul is a pagan Greek import that is not found in scripture. Unfortunately, this concept obscures the glorious New Testament promise of a bodily resurrection at Christ's second advent, and it also obscures the objective nature of the gospel. The New Testament never suggests that we should look within ourselves for righteousness or eternal life. Since we are sinners who are condemned to death, righteousness and eternal life are located outside of us in the Person of Jesus Christ and are credited to us as an act of pure grace on God's part. This means that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is a subtle denial of salvation by grace alone and Christ alone. And since immortality is commonly associated with the term "soul," this translation avoids the use of that term and substitutes other terms that are more in keeping with the wholistic sense of the original Greek text.

Two further points should be noted: (1) This translation attempts to use gender inclusive language when the original text is gender inclusive and gender specific language when the original text is gender specific. Although God does not have gender, the scriptures usually apply male terminology to God, in order to convey the sense of a just and loving Father. Consequently, this translation does not apply female terminology to God, except in rare cases when it appears in the original text. (2) In Greek, the present tense has a continuous sense to it. Notice the difference between the simple present form "go" and the present continuous forms "is going," "keeps going," "continues going," and "makes a practice

of going.” In rendering the Greek present tense, this translation uses present continuous forms whenever they are consistent with good English style.

Special Features: Endnotes appear after each chapter. These endnotes are intended to aid the reader in understanding the text, and they also list important variant readings that appear in the different Greek manuscripts. Also, study guides that contain questions have been included at the end of each New Testament book. These questions are intended to engage the reader in careful thought and are especially designed for small group Bible study.

The *Modern Evangelical Version* of the New Testament is largely based on the Fourth Revised Edition of *The Greek New Testament* that was published by the Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft and the United Bible Societies in 1993. However, attention has also been given to variant readings in the Greek manuscripts, and the principles of textual criticism have been carefully employed in attempting to choose the original reading. In cases when the original reading is uncertain or when the chosen reading differs significantly from the reading in the so-called “Textus Receptus,” variant readings have been listed in the endnotes.

It is the sincere prayer of the translator that the *Modern Evangelical Version* of the New Testament will be used by God the Holy Spirit to kindle faith in Jesus Christ and His good news, to advance Christ’s kingdom on earth, and to hasten the day when Christ will come again.

Robert Thomas Helm
(Translator)

Matthew

CHAPTER 1

The Family History of Jesus Christ

(1) This is a record of the family history of Jesus Christ^a—a Descendant of David and a Descendant of Abraham.^b

(2) Abraham brought forth^c Isaac, Isaac brought forth Jacob, Jacob brought forth Judah and his brothers, (3) Judah brought forth Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez brought forth Hezron, Hezron brought forth Ram, (4) Ram brought forth Amminadab, Amminadab brought forth Nahshon, Nahshon brought forth Salmon, (5) Salmon brought forth Boaz by Rahab, Boaz brought forth Obed by Ruth, Obed brought forth Jesse, (6) and Jesse brought forth King David.

David brought forth Solomon by Uriah's wife, (7) Solomon brought forth Rehoboam, Rehoboam brought forth Abijah, Abijah brought forth Asa, (8) Asa brought forth Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat brought forth Jehoram, Jehoram brought forth Uzziah, (9) Uzziah brought forth Jotham, Jotham brought forth Ahaz, Ahaz brought forth Hezekiah, (10) Hezekiah brought forth Manasseh, Manasseh brought forth Amon, Amon brought forth Josiah, (11) and Josiah brought Jehoiachin^d and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.

(12) After the exile to Babylon, Jehoiachin brought forth Shealtiel, Shealtiel brought forth Zerubbabel, (13) Zerubbabel brought forth Abiud, Abiud brought forth Eliakim, Eliakim brought forth Azor, (14) Azor brought forth Zadok, Zadok brought forth Akim, Akim brought forth Eliud, (15) Eliud brought forth Eleazar, Eleazar brought forth Matthan, Matthan brought forth Jacob, (16) and Jacob brought forth Joseph, the husband of Mary, the mother of Jesus, Who is called Christ.

(17) So there were 14 generations from Abraham to David, 14 from David to the Babylonian exile, and 14 from the Babylonian exile to the Christ.

The Birth of Jesus Christ

(18) Now the birth of Jesus Christ happened this way: His mother Mary was engaged to Joseph, but before they slept together, she was found to be pregnant by the Holy Spirit. (19) And because her fiancé Joseph was a righteous man, he was unwilling to disgrace her publicly. So he decided to break the engagement in private.

(20) But while he was considering this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, descendant^e of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife. For she has conceived her Child by the Holy Spirit. (21) She will give birth to a Son, and you are to name Him Jesus.^f For He will save His people from

their sins.”

(22) All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:

(23) “The virgin will become pregnant
and give birth to a Son.
And He will be called Immanuel”^g

—which means, “God with us.”

(24) Now when Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord had instructed him and took Mary home as his wife. (25) But he did not sleep with her until she had given birth to her Son. And he named the Child Jesus.

^aThe Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. See also verses 16-18. ^b Or *a Son of David and a Son of Abraham*. ^c The Greek verb can denote the birth of an immediate child or the beginning of a family line leading up to a more distant descendant. This applies to each use of *brought forth* in verses 2-16. A number of generations appear to have been omitted from this genealogy. Four kings of Judah—Ahaziah, Joash, Amaziah, and Jehoiakim—have clearly been omitted. ^d Literally, *Jeconiah*—see also verse 12. ^e Or *son* ^f *Jesus* is the Greek form of the Hebrew name *Joshua*, which means *the LORD saves*. ^g Isa. 7:14

CHAPTER 2

Wise Men Visit Baby Jesus

(1) Now after Jesus had been born in Bethlehem of Judea, during the reign of King Herod, wise men^a from the east arrived in Jerusalem. (2) “Where is the newborn King of the Jews?” they asked. “We saw His star in the east^b and have come to worship Him.” (3) When King Herod heard this, he and all the people of Jerusalem were alarmed. (4) So he assembled all the chief priests and scribes of the people and asked them where the Christ^c was to be born. (5) “In Bethlehem of Judea,” they answered. “For this is what the prophet wrote:

(6) ‘And you, Bethlehem, in the country of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah.
For out of you will come a Ruler
Who will guide My people Israel.’^d

(7) At this, Herod secretly summoned the wise men and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. (8) Then he sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the Child, and as soon as you find Him, report back to me, so I can go and worship Him as well.”

(9) Now after they had listened to what the king had to say, they went on their way. And the star they had seen in the east continued to lead them forward until it stopped over the place where the Child was. (10) When they noticed the star, they were filled with great joy.

(11) So they went into the house and saw the Child with His mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped Him. Then they opened their treasure chests and presented Him with gifts of gold, frankincense,^e and myrrh.^f (12) But after they were warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their own country by a different route.

The Escape to Egypt

(13) When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up! Take the Child and His mother, and flee to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you to leave, for Herod is going to search for the Child and try to kill Him.”

(14) So Joseph got up, and taking the Child and His mother, he left for Egypt during the night. (15) And He stayed there until Herod’s death, in order to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:

“Out of Egypt, I called My Son.”^g

Herod Murders the Children

(16) Meanwhile, Herod became extremely angry when he realized that the wise men had outwitted him. So he sent soldiers to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its surrounding region who were two years old and under, in accordance with the exact time he had learned from the wise men. (17) Then the words that were spoken by the prophet Jeremiah were fulfilled:

(18) “A voice is heard in Ramah—
crying and great mourning,
Rachel crying for her children
and refusing to be comforted,
because they are no more.”^h

The Return to Nazareth

(19) Now after Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream while he was in Egypt (20) and said, “Get up! Take the Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel. For the people who were trying to kill the Child are dead.”

(21) So Joseph got up, and taking the Child and His mother, he went to the land of Israel. (22) But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after he was warned in a dream, he returned to the region of Galilee (23) and settled in a town called Nazareth, in order to fulfill what was said through the prophets:

“He will be called a Nazarene.”ⁱ

^aThe Greek reads *Magi*—see also verses 7 and 16. ^b Or *at its rising*—see also verse 9. ^c The Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. ^d Mic. 5:2 ^e a white or pale yellow aromatic gum that was imported from Arabia ^f another aromatic gum that was derived from trees in Arabia and east Africa ^g Hos. 11:1 ^h Jer. 31:15 ⁱ This is probably an allusion to Isa. 11:1. In this passage, the Messiah is referred to as *a Branch* (Heb. *Nezer*). *Nazareth* means *the place of branches*.

CHAPTER 3

The Coming of John the Baptist

(1) In those days, John the Baptist made his appearance. He was preaching in the Judean desert (2) and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has drawn near!” (3) He was the man the prophet Isaiah was speaking about when he said:

“A voice is crying in the desert,
‘Prepare the way for the Lord!
Make His paths straight!’”^a

(4) John wore clothing made from camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist. And his diet consisted of locusts^b and wild honey. (5) People were coming out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea, and the whole region of the Jordan, (6) and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they confessed their sins.

(7) But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to the place where he was baptizing, he said to them, “You poisonous vipers! Who warned you to flee from God’s coming anger? (8) Produce deeds that are consistent with repentance, (9) and do not say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor.’^c For I tell you that God can raise up descendants^d for Abraham out of these stones. (10) The axe has already been laid at the roots of the trees. Every tree that fails to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

(11) I am baptizing you with^e water as a sign of repentance. But the Man Who is coming after me is more powerful than I am, and I am unworthy to carry His sandals. He will baptize you with the fire of the Holy Spirit. (12) His shovel is in His hand, and He will clean out His threshing floor. He will gather the wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with fire that cannot be put out.”

John Baptizes Jesus

(13) Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan River, to be baptized by John. (14) But John tried to stop Him. “I need to be baptized by You,” he said, “and are You coming to Me?” (15) At this, Jesus replied, “Permit it for now, because this is the proper way for us to fulfill all righteousness.”

(16) Now as soon as Jesus was baptized, He came up from the water. Then heaven was opened, and John^f saw the Spirit of God coming down like a dove and lighting on Him. (17) And a voice from heaven said, “This is My Son Whom I love, and I am pleased with Him.”

^aIsa.40:3 (Septuagint) ^b Although the Greek term that has been translated *locusts* normally denotes insects, an old tradition dating back to the early church fathers suggests that in this verse, the term refers to carob pods. The matter is still debated. ^c Or *father*. ^d Or *children* ^e Or *in*—this applies to each use of *with* in verse 11. ^f Literally, *he*

CHAPTER 4

Satan Tempts Jesus

(1) Then the Spirit led Jesus up into the desert to be tempted by the devil. (2) And after He had fasted for 40 days and 40 nights, He was very hungry.

(3) At this point, the tempter came to Him and said, “If You are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread.” (4) But Jesus answered him, “It is written:

‘Human beings^a do not live on bread alone,
but on every word that comes from
the mouth of God.’^b

(5) Then the devil took Him into the holy city and placed Him on the highest point of the temple. (6) “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down!” he said. “For it is written:

‘He will command His angels regarding you,
and they will hold you up in their hands—
to keep you from dashing your foot against a stone.’^c

(7) But Jesus replied, “It is also written:

‘You must not tempt the Lord your God.’^d

(8) Then the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in their splendor. (9) “I will give You all these things,” he said, “if You will bow down and worship me.” (10) At this, Jesus exclaimed, “Get away, Satan! For it is written:

‘You must worship the Lord your God
and serve Him alone.’”^e

(11) Then the devil left Him, and angels came and started caring for His needs.

Jesus Begins His Ministry

(12) Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, He returned to Galilee. (13) And leaving Nazareth, He went to live in Capernaum on the lake, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali—(14) in order to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah:

(15) “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
on the road to the sea, across the Jordan River,
Galilee of the Gentiles—
(16) the people living in darkness
saw a great Light;
on those living in the land
of the shadow of death,
a Light dawned.”^f

(17) From that time on, Jesus began to preach, “Repent! For the kingdom of heaven has drawn near.”

Jesus’ First Disciples

(18) Now as He was walking beside the Lake of Galilee, He noticed two brothers—Simon, who was called Peter, and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. (19) “Come and follow Me,” Jesus told them, “and I will make you fishers for people.” (20) So they immediately left their nets and followed Him.

(21) Then He continued on and noticed two other brothers—James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, repairing their nets. But when Jesus called them, (22) they immediately left the boat and their father, and followed Him.

Jesus Ministers in Galilee

(23) So Jesus traveled all over Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news about the kingdom, and healing every disease and physical disorder among the people. (24) His fame spread throughout Syria, and people brought Him all the sick—those who had various diseases or who suffered severe pain,

the demon-possessed, and those who had epilepsy or paralysis. And He healed them. (25) So huge crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis,^g Jerusalem, Judea, and the region across the Jordan River followed Him.

^aThe Greek term that has been translated *human beings/people* in verses 4 and 19 is gender inclusive. ^b Deut. 8:3 ^c Ps. 91:11-12 ^d Deut. 6:16 (Septuagint) ^e Deut. 6:13 ^f Isa. 9:1-2 ^g The Decapolis was an autonomous association of Greek-speaking towns, originally ten in number.

CHAPTER 5

The Sermon on the Mount^a

(1) When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on a mountain. And after He sat down, His disciples came to Him, (2) and He began to teach them:

The Beatitudes

- (3) “How blessed^b are the spiritually destitute,
for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.
- (4) How blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.
- (5) How blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.
- (6) How blessed are those who hunger
and thirst after righteousness,
for they will be satisfied.
- (7) How blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
- (8) How blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.
- (9) How blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children^c of God.
- (10) How blessed are those who are persecuted
because of their righteousness,
for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

(11) How blessed you are when people heap insults on you and persecute you and falsely accuse you of all kinds of evil because of Me. (12) Rejoice with unspeakable happiness, because you will have a great reward in heaven! For this is the very way people persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Salt and Light

(13) You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, what can make it salty again? Since it is no longer good for anything, it is thrown out and trampled under

people's^d feet.

(14) You are the light of the world. A town on a hill cannot be hidden. (15) Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a measuring basket.^c Instead, they put it on a lampstand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. (16) In the same way, let your light shine before the people, so they can see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

The Importance of God's Law

(17) Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I didn't come to abolish them, but to fulfill them. (18) For truly I tell you, as long as the earth and the sky endure, the smallest letter or even the smallest part of a letter,^f will by no means disappear from the law until everything is accomplished.

(19) So anyone who breaks even the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever practices and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (20) For I tell you that unless your righteousness is far greater than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Anger and Murder

(21) You have heard that it was said to the ancient people, 'You must not murder,'^g and 'Anyone who commits murder will be found guilty in the judgment.' (22) But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother^h will be found guilty in the judgment. And anyone who insults his brotherⁱ will be found guilty before the Sanhedrin.^j What is more, anyone who says, 'You stupid fool!' will be in danger of fiery hell.

(23) So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and you remember that your brother has something against you, (24) leave your gift right there in front of the altar. First go and make peace with your brother, and then come back and offer your gift.

(25) Make friends with your legal opponent quickly, while you both are still on your way to court. If you don't, your opponent may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the guard, and then you will be thrown into prison. (26) Truly I tell you, you won't get out of there until you pay back the last penny.^k

Lust and Adultery

(27) You have heard that it was said, 'You must not commit adultery.'^l (28) But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (29) So if your right eye keeps leading you into sin, rip it out and throw it away! It is better for you to lose one part of your body than to have your whole body thrown into hell. (30) And if your right hand keeps leading you into sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than to have your whole body go to hell.

Divorce and Adultery

(31) It was also said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a written notice of divorce.’^m (32) But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife for any reason other than sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery. And anyone who marries a divorced woman is likewise committing adultery.

Oaths

(33) Again, you have heard that it was said to the ancient people, ‘You must not break your vows; you must fulfill your oaths to the Lord.’ⁿ (34) But I tell you not to swear at all. Do not swear by heaven, for it is God’s throne, (35) or by the earth, for it is His footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. (36) And do not swear by your head, since you can’t make even one hair white or black. (37) Just say ‘Yes’ or ‘No.’ Anything more than this comes from the evil one.

Revenge

(38) You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’^o (39) But I tell you not to resist an evil person. If someone slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other cheek to him as well. (40) If someone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your robe too. (41) And if someone forces you to go one mile,^p go two miles with him. (42) Be willing to give when you are asked, and do not turn away from the person who wants to borrow money from you.

Love for Enemies

(43) You have heard that it was said, ‘You must love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ (44) But I tell you to love your enemies and to pray for those who persecute you, (45) so you can be children of your Father in heaven. He causes His sun to rise on evil people and good people alike, and He sends rain on righteous people and unrighteous people.

(46) If you only love those who love you, what reward will you get? Don’t even the tax collectors do that? (47) And if you only greet your brothers, what great things are you achieving? Even the pagans^q do that, don’t they? (48) So be spiritually complete, just as your heavenly Father is complete.”

^aJesus’ sermon continues through Matt. 7. ^b Or *happy*—this applies to each use of *blessed* in verses 3-11. ^c Literally, *sons*—see also verse 45. ^d The Greek term that has been translated *people’s/people* in verses 13 and 16 is gender inclusive. ^e The Greek term refers to a measuring container with an approximate volume of ¼ bushel. ^f Literally, *one iota or one projection*—the letter *iota* is the smallest letter in the Greek alphabet. The term *projection* refers to a part of a letter. ^g Ex. 20:13 (Septuagint); Deut. 5:17 (Septuagint) ^h Some manuscripts add *without a cause*. ⁱ Literally, *And anyone who says to his brother ‘Raca!’* *Raca* is an Aramaic term of contempt. ^j The Great Sanhedrin (or Great Council) functioned as the

highest Jewish court. ^k Literally, *the last quadrans*—the *quadrans* was minted by the Romans and was worth approximately one cent. ^l Ex. 20:14 (Septuagint); Deut. 5:18 (Septuagint) ^m Deut. 24:1-3 ⁿ Lev. 19:12; Num. 30:2; Deut. 23:21-23 ^o Ex. 21:24 (Septuagint); Lev. 24:20 (Septuagint); Deut. 19:21 (Septuagint) ^p The Roman mile was approximately four thousand, eight hundred sixty feet in length. ^q Some manuscripts read *Even the tax collectors*.

CHAPTER 6

Humility in Giving

(1) “Be careful not to flaunt your righteousness before others,^a to be noticed by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. (2) So when you give something to the needy, do not sound a note on the trumpets. This is what the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets to win praise from the people. Truly I tell you, they are already receiving their full reward. (3) But when you give to the needy, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. (4) Then your giving will be in secret, and your Father, Who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

The Lord’s Prayer

(5) And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites. They love to pray while standing in the synagogues and on the street corners, for everyone to see them. Truly I tell you, they are already receiving their full reward. (6) But when you pray, go into your private room, shut the door, and pray to your Father, Who is unseen. Then your Father, Who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

(7) And when you are praying, do not rattle off meaningless words like the pagans, who think their prayers will be heard because of their many words. (8) Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

(9) This is how you should pray:

‘Our Father in heaven—
may Your name be hallowed.

(10) Let Your kingdom come.

Let Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

(11) Give us our daily^b bread today.

(12) And forgive us our debts,
as we have forgiven our debtors.

(13) Do not bring us into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.^c

(14) For if you forgive the sins of others, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. (15) But if you don't forgive others,^d your Father will not forgive your sins either.

Fasting

(16) And when you fast, do not be gloomy like the hypocrites who disfigure their faces to show people they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they are already receiving their full reward. (17) But when you are fasting, put oil on your head and wash your face, (18) so that your fasting will not be noticed by anyone except your Father, Who is unseen. Then your Father, Who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Treasures in Heaven

(19) Do not store up treasures for yourselves on the earth, where moths and rust destroy them, and where thieves dig through walls^e to steal them. (20) Instead, store up your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy them, and where thieves cannot dig through walls to steal them. (21) For wherever your treasure is, there your heart will also be.

The Lamp of the Body

(22) The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be radiant with light. (23) But if your eyes are poor, your whole body will be full of darkness. And if the only light you have inside of you is darkness, what a terrible darkness that will be!

(24) No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Worry

(25) This is why I tell you not to worry about your life and what you will eat,^f or about your body and what you will wear. Life is more important than food, and the body is more important than clothing.

(26) Look at the birds in the sky. They don't sow or reap or gather their food into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth more than birds? (27) How can worry add a single hour to your life?^g

(28) And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the flowers in the fields and how they grow. They don't struggle to spin yarn. (29) And yet I tell you that even Solomon in all his splendor wasn't clothed like one of these flowers. (30) So if this is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and thrown into an oven tomorrow, won't He do much more for you, O people of little faith?

(31) So do not worry and ask, ‘What are we going to eat?’ or ‘What are we going to drink?’ or ‘What are we going to wear?’ (32) These are all the things the pagans discuss. However, your Father knows that you have all these needs. (33) But seek His kingdom and His righteousness first, and all these things will be provided for you as well. (34) So do not worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

^aThe Greek term that has been translated *people, others, everyone, or anyone* in verses 1, 2, 5, 14-16, and 18 is gender inclusive. ^bThe meaning of the Greek term that has been translated *daily* is uncertain. ^cSome manuscripts add *For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.* ^dSome manuscripts read *forgive others their sins.* ^eIn the time of Christ, many houses were constructed with mud bricks. Determined thieves could dig through the walls of these houses to steal valuables inside. ^fSome manuscripts read *and what will you eat or what will you drink.* ^gOr *How can worry add a single cubit to your height?* (One standard cubit equals approximately 18 inches.)

CHAPTER 7

Judging Others

(1) “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. (2) For the standard you use to judge others will be the one by which you are judged. And the measuring system you use to measure others will be the one by which you are measured.

(3) Why do you keep looking at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the board in your own eye? (4) How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ while there is still a board in your own eye? (5) You hypocrite! First take the board out of your own eye, and then your vision will be clear enough to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

Despising Holy Things

(6) Do not give dogs what is holy or throw your pearls in front of pigs. They will only trample on them and then turn around and attack you.

Effective Prayer

(7) Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you. (8) Everyone who keeps asking receives; those who keep seeking find, and to those who keep knocking, the door will be opened.

(9) Is there anyone^a among you who would hand his son a stone when he asks for bread, (10) or a snake when he asks for fish? (11) So if you who are evil know

how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

The Golden Rule

(12) Always treat others as you would like them to treat you. For this is the meaning of the law and the prophets.

The Narrow and Wide Gates

(13) Go in through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many people entering that way. (14) But how narrow is the gate and how full of troubles is the road that leads to life, and only a few people are finding it.

False Prophets and Their Fruit

(15) Be on your guard against false prophets who come to you dressed in sheep's clothing, but who are savage wolves on the inside.^b (16) You will recognize them by their fruit. Do people gather clusters of grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? (17) In the same way, every good tree keeps producing good fruit, but a bad tree^c keeps producing bad fruit.^d (18) A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. (19) And every tree that does not produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (20) So you will recognize them by their fruit.

I Never Knew You

(21) Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who continue to do the will of My Father in heaven. (22) On the last day,^e many people will say to Me, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophecy in Your name? And didn't we use Your name to drive out demons and perform many miracles?' (23) But I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Get away from Me, you lawless people!'^f

Building on Rock and Sand

(24) Everyone who hears these words of Mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on solid rock. (25) The rain came down, the rivers rose, and the wind blew hard against that house. Yet it did not fall, because its foundation had been built on rock.

(26) But everyone who hears these words of Mine and fails to put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. (27) The rain came down, the rivers rose, and the wind blew hard against that house. And down it went with a great crash!"

The Authority of Jesus

(28) When Jesus had finished His sermon, the crowds were amazed at His teaching. (29) For unlike their scribes, He taught them with authority.

^aThe Greek term that has been translated *anyone/others* in verses 9 and 12 is gender inclusive. ^b Jesus seems to be alluding to one of Aesop's fables entitled *The Wolf In Sheep's Clothing*. ^c Or *a rotten tree*—see also verse 18. ^d Or *worthless fruit*—see also verse 18. ^e Literally, *On that day*, ^f Ps. 6:8

CHAPTER 8

Jesus Heals a Man with Leprosy

(1) Now after Jesus came down from the mountain, huge crowds followed Him. (2) Suddenly, a man with leprosy^a approached Him. He knelt down before Jesus and said, “Sir, if You want to, You can make me clean.” (3) At this, Jesus reached out His hand and touched the man. “I want to,” He answered. “Be clean!” And immediately, his leprosy was cured.

(4) Then Jesus said to him, “See to it that you don’t tell anyone about this. But go and show yourself to the priests, and offer the sacrifice Moses commanded,^b as proof to them that you are cured.”

Jesus Heals a Centurion’s Servant

(5) Now as Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion^c approached Him and asked for help. (6) “Sir,” he said, “my servant is lying at home paralyzed and in terrible pain.” (7) “I will go and heal him,” Jesus answered. (8) But the centurion replied, “Sir, I am not worthy to have You come under my roof. Just speak the word, and my servant will be healed. (9) For I myself am under authority, and I have soldiers under me. I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

(10) When Jesus heard this, He was amazed, and He said to the people who were following Him, “Truly I tell you, I haven’t found anyone in Israel with so much faith! (11) Many, I tell you, will come from the east and the west and recline^d at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. (12) But those who were born as citizens of the kingdom will be driven into outer darkness, where there will be crying and gnashing of teeth.”

(13) Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go back home, and what you have believed will be done for you.” And his servant was healed at that very hour.

Jesus Visits Peter's House

(14) Later, Jesus went to Peter's house, where He found Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. (15) But when He touched her hand, the fever left her, and she got up and started caring for His needs.

(16) That evening, many people who were demon-possessed were brought to Jesus, and He drove the spirits out with a command and healed everyone who was sick. (17) So the words that were spoken by the prophet Isaiah were fulfilled:

“He took away our weaknesses,
and carried away our diseases.”^e

Would-be Disciples

(18) But when Jesus noticed the large crowds around Him, He gave instructions to set out for the other side of the lake. (19) Then one of the scribes approached Him and said, “Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.” (20) At this, Jesus replied, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head.”

(21) Another disciple said to Him, “Sir, let me go back and bury my father first.” (22) But Jesus responded, “Follow Me, and let the spiritually^f dead bury their own dead.”

Jesus Calms a Storm

(23) At this point, He got into a boat, and His disciples followed Him. (24) Suddenly, a fierce storm broke over the lake, and the boat was swamped by the waves. Now Jesus was sleeping, (25) and His disciples came and woke Him. “Lord, save us!” they cried. “We're going to drown!”

(26) “You people of little faith,” He replied, “Why are you so afraid?” Then He got up and rebuked the wind and the lake, and there was a great calm. (27) But the people^g with Him were amazed and exclaimed, “What kind of Man is this? Even the wind and the lake obey Him!”

Jesus and the Demons

(28) When Jesus arrived in the region of the Gadarenes,^h on the other side of the lake, two demon-possessed men came out of the burial caves to meet Him. They were so violent that no one could travel on that road. (29) “What common ground is there between us, Son of God?” they screamed. “Have You come here to torture us before our appointed time?”

(30) Now a large herd of pigs was feeding in the distance. (31) And the demons kept pleading with Jesus, “If You are going to drive us out, send us into that herd of pigs.” (32) “Then go,” Jesus replied. So the demons came out and went into the

pigs, and suddenly, the entire herd rushed over the cliff into the lake and drowned in the water.

(33) With that, the herdsmen ran off and went into town, where they reported the whole story, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. (34) Then all the townspeople came out for a meeting with Jesus. And as soon as they saw Him, they begged Him to leave their region.

^aThe term *leprosy* was probably used for several different skin diseases. ^b See Lev. 14:1-32. ^c A centurion was a commander of approximately 100 Roman soldiers. ^d In the time of Jesus, people who were attending a feast commonly reclined on couches as they ate. ^e Isa. 53:4 ^f Although the word *spiritually* does not appear in the original text, it has been added for clarification. ^g The Greek term that has been translated *people* is gender inclusive. ^h Some manuscripts read *Gergesenes*; others read *Gerasenes*.

CHAPTER 9

Jesus Heals a Paralyzed Man

(1) Now after Jesus got into the boat, He crossed the lake and returned to His own town,^a (2) where some people brought Him a paralyzed man, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralyzed man, “Cheer up, friend!^b Your sins are forgiven.”

(3) At this, some of the scribes said to themselves, “This Fellow is speaking blasphemy!” (4) But Jesus knew what they were thinking. “Why are you harboring evil thoughts in your minds?” He asked. (5) “Is it easier to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? (6) However, I will prove to you that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” And with that, He said to the paralyzed man, “Get up, pick up your mat, and go home!”

(7) Then the man got up and went home. (8) Now the crowds were filled with awe when they saw this, and they praised God for giving such power to human beings.^c

Matthew Becomes a Disciple

(9) As Jesus traveled on from there, He saw a man named Matthew, sitting in a tax collector’s booth. “Follow Me!” Jesus told him. And Matthew got up and followed Him.

(10) Some time later, Jesus was reclining^d at a feast in Matthew’s home, and many tax collectors and “sinners” arrived and started eating with Jesus and His

disciples. (11) Now when the Pharisees noticed these outcasts, they asked the disciples, “Why is your Teacher always eating with tax collectors and ‘sinners’?”

(12) Meanwhile, Jesus heard what they were saying. “Healthy people don’t need a doctor,” He replied. “But sick people do. (13) So go and learn what this scripture means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’^e For I didn’t come to call righteous people, but sinners.”

A Discussion about Fasting

(14) Then John’s disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Why do we and the Pharisees continue to fast,^f but Your disciples never fast?” (15) Jesus responded, “Surely the wedding guests cannot be sad while the groom is still with them. But the time is coming when the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.

(16) No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old robe. For the patch will pull away from the robe and leave a bigger hole. (17) Nor do people pour new wine^g into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, and then the wine will run out, and the skins will be ruined. No, people pour new wine into new wineskins so that both are preserved.”

A Dead Girl and a Sick Woman

(18) While Jesus was still speaking with John’s disciples, one of the synagogue leaders came and knelt before Him. “My daughter just died,” he said. “But come and put Your hand on her, and she will live.” (19) So Jesus and His disciples got up and followed him.

(20) At that moment, a woman who had been suffering from severe bleeding for twelve years came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His robe. (21) For she kept saying to herself, “If I can just touch His robe, I will be healed.” (22) Then Jesus turned around and looked at her. “Cheer up, daughter!” He said. “Your faith has healed you.” And from that very hour, the woman was well.

(23) When Jesus arrived at the leader’s home, He saw the flute players and the noisy crowd. (24) “Go away!” He exclaimed. “The girl isn’t dead. She is only sleeping.” And with that, they began laughing at Him.

(25) But after the crowd had been sent outside, Jesus went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up. (26) And the news about this miracle spread all over that part of the country.

Jesus Heals Two Blind Men

(27) As Jesus traveled on from there, two blind men followed Him. “Have mercy on us, Son of David!”^h they cried. (28) And after He had gone inside, the blind men came to Him, and He asked them, “Do you believe I can do this?” “Yes, Sir,

we do,” they answered.

(29) Then He touched their eyes and said, “May what you have believed be done for you.” (30) And with that, their sight was restored. But Jesus sternly warned them, “See to it that no one knows about this.” (31) Nevertheless, they went out and spread the news about Him all over that part of the country.

A Man with a Demon

(32) While the two men were leaving, some people brought Jesus another man who was demon-possessed and who couldn’t speak. (33) But as soon as the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke, and the people were amazed. “Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel!” they exclaimed.

(34) But the Pharisees kept complaining. “This Fellow drives out demons by the prince of demons,” they said.

Sheep without a Shepherd

(35) So Jesus continued traveling through all the towns and villages, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the good news about the kingdom, and healing every disease and physical disorder. (36) And as He looked at the crowds, He was filled with pity for them, because they were bewildered and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

(37) Then Jesus said to His disciples, “The harvest is great, but the workers are few. (38) So pray that the Lord of the harvest will send out workers into His harvest fields.”

^aJesus’ hometown was now Capernaum. See Matt. 4:13. ^bLiterally, *child!* ^cThe Greek term that has been translated *human beings* is gender inclusive. ^dIn the time of Jesus, people who were attending a feast commonly reclined on couches as they ate. ^eHos. 6:6 (Septuagint) ^fSome manuscripts read *fast often*. ^gThe term *new wine* refers to unfermented or slightly fermented grape juice. If grape juice was poured into an old wineskin, the fermenting juice would produce gases, causing the weakened wineskin to burst. Only aged wine that was no longer fermenting could be stored in old wineskins. ^hOr *Descendant of David!*—the *Son of David* is a Messianic title that refers to Jesus.

CHAPTER 10

The Twelve Apostles

(1) Then Jesus called His twelve disciples together and gave them power to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and physical disorder. (2) These are the name of the twelve apostles: First, Simon (also called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; (3) Philip and Bartholomew;^a Thomas and Matthew^b the tax collector; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;^c (4) Simon the Zealot^d and Judas, the man from Kerioth,^e who later betrayed Jesus.

Instructions for the Twelve

(5) These twelve were sent out by Jesus with the following instructions: “Do not take any road into Gentile territory or enter any Samaritan town. (6) Go instead to the lost sheep of the nation of Israel. (7) And as you go, continue to preach that the kingdom of heaven has drawn near. (8) Keep healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing those who have leprosy,^f and driving out demons. You have received everything as a gift, so give it without charge. (9) Do not put any gold, silver, or copper coins in your belts. (10) And do not take a traveling bag for your journey, or an extra shirt, or sandals, or a staff. For a worker deserves his support.

(11) Whenever you enter a town or village, find some worthy person in it and stay with him until you leave. (12) As you enter the home, give his family your greeting. (13) And if they are deserving, let your blessing of peace remain on them. But if they are undeserving, you must take your blessing back.

(14) And if no one welcomes you or listens to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. (15) Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

(16) I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. So be cunning like snakes and innocent like doves. (17) Always be on your guard against human beings!^g For they will hand you over to local councils and flog you in their synagogues. (18) And because of Me, you will be brought before governors and kings—as witnesses to them and to the nations. (19) But when you are arrested, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. For the words you need will be given to you at that time. (20) It won’t be you speaking; the Spirit of your Father will be speaking through you.

(21) A brother will hand over his brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. (22) Everyone will hate you because of Me, but whoever holds out to the end will be saved. (23) So when people persecute you in one town, flee to another town. Truly I tell you, you will not complete your work in the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

(24) A disciple is not superior to his teacher, nor is a slave superior to his master. (25) A disciple should be satisfied to be like his teacher, and a slave like his master. If they called the Master of the household Beelezub,^h how much more will this happen to the Master's own family members! (26) But do not be afraid of them.

Everything that is concealed will be brought to light, and everything that is hidden will be made known. (27) Whatever I tell you in the darkness, you must speak in the light, and whatever is whispered in your ear, you must proclaim from the housetops. (28) Do not be afraid of those who can kill your body, but who cannot really take your life. Rather, be afraid of the One Who can destroy both life and body in hell. (29) Aren't two sparrows sold for a penny?ⁱ Yet not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father's knowledge. (30) And even the very hairs of your head have all been numbered. (31) So do not be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows.

(32) If anyone acknowledges Me before other people, I will also acknowledge him before My Father in heaven. (33) But if anyone denies Me before other people, I will also deny him before My Father in heaven.

(34) Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth. No, I came to bring a sword! (35) I came to turn a son against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. (36) A person's enemies will be his own family members.

(37) Whoever loves his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and whoever loves his son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. (38) What is more, whoever refuses to take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. (39) Whoever finds his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of Me will find it.

(40) Anyone who welcomes you is welcoming Me, and anyone who welcomes Me is welcoming the One Who sent Me. (41) Anyone who welcomes the Prophet because He is the Prophet will be rewarded by the Prophet, and anyone who welcomes the Righteous One because He is the Righteous One will be rewarded by the Righteous One.^j (42) Furthermore, if anyone gives a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is My disciple—truly I tell you, he will by no means lose his reward.^k

^a*Bartholomew* means *son of Talmi*. His personal name was probably *Nathanael*. See John 1:45-51. ^b It seems that *Matthew* was also known as *Levi*. Compare Matt. 9:9-13 with Mark 2:14-17 and Luke 5:27-32. ^c It seems that *Thaddaeus* was also known as *Judas*. See Luke 6:16; John 14:22, and Acts 1:13. ^d The *Zealots* were an extremist political group that called for violent rebellion against Rome. ^e *Kerioth* was a town in southern Judea. ^f The term *leprosy* was probably used for several different skin diseases. ^g The Greek term that has been translated *human beings, other people, or person's* in verses 17, 32, 33, and 36 is gender inclusive. ^h The Greek literally

reads *Beelzeboul* or *Beezebul*.ⁱ Literally, *an assarion*—the *assarion* or *as* was worth approximately ½ cent.^j *The Prophet* and *the Righteous One* are Messianic titles that refer to Jesus.

CHAPTER 11

(1) After Jesus had finished instructing His twelve disciples, He moved on from there to teach and preach in His disciples' hometowns.

A Question from John the Baptist

(2) Now John was in prison when He heard what Christ^a was doing. So he sent his own disciples (3) to ask Him, “Are You the Coming One,^b or should we keep waiting for someone else?” (4) Jesus replied, “Go back and give John a report about what you are hearing and seeing. (5) The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with leprosy^c are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the destitute. (6) How blessed^d is the person who doesn't stumble over Me!”

Jesus Praises John the Baptist

(7) As the messengers were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: “What did you go out into the desert to look at? A reed being blown by the wind? (8) But really, what did you go out to see? Someone^e dressed in soft robes? No, people who are in the habit of wearing soft clothing live in kings' palaces. (9) So what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and far more than a prophet! (10) This is the man about whom it is written:

‘I am sending My messenger ahead of You,
and he will prepare Your way before You.’^f

(11) Truly I tell you, among those born of women, no one has been greater than John the Baptist. But the person who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.^g (12) Ever since the time of John the Baptist, the kingdom of heaven has been relentlessly advancing, and violent people have been attacking it.^h (13) Moreover, all the prophets and the law spoke for God until John appeared. (14) And if you are willing to accept My word, he is the Elijah who was to come.ⁱ (15) Whoever has ears, let him hear!

(16) How can I describe this generation? These people are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to each other:

(17) ‘We played the flute for you, and you didn’t dance.
We sang funeral songs, and you didn’t mourn.’

(18) For John did not come eating and drinking, and yet people keep saying he has a demon. (19) But the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and people keep saying, ‘Look! A glutton and a drunk, a friend of tax collectors and “sinners”!’ Nevertheless, the way of wisdom is proven right by those who accept it.”^j

The Unbelieving Towns

(20) Then Jesus began to denounce the towns where most of His miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. (21) “Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. (22) I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you.

(23) And you, Capernaum! Will you be lifted up to heaven? No, you will go down to the grave. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would still be standing today. (24) I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.”

Jesus Praises His Father

(25) Now at that time, Jesus exclaimed, “Father, Lord of heaven and earth, I praise You because You have hidden these things from wise and intelligent people, and have revealed them to babies! (26) Yes, Father, for this was pleasing to You.

(27) Everything has been entrusted to Me by My Father. No one fully knows the Son except the Father, and no one fully knows the Father except the Son—and anyone to whom the Son desires to reveal Him.

Rest in Christ

(28) Come to Me, all of you who are weary and overburdened, and I will give you rest. (29) Put on My yoke and learn from Me. For I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for yourselves. (30) For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.”

^aThe Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. ^bThe *Coming One* is a Messianic title that refers to Jesus. ^cThe term *leprosy* was probably used for several different skin diseases. ^dOr *happy* ^eThe Greek term that has been translated *Someone* is gender inclusive. ^fMal. 3:1 ^gJesus regarded John the Baptist as the greatest of the prophets because he stood at the threshold of the new age of the kingdom of heaven. But the most humble follower of Jesus is already a full participant in that kingdom, and is, in this sense, greater than John. ^hThe meaning of the Greek in this verse is uncertain. ⁱSee Mal. 4:5. On the basis of this scripture, it was commonly believed that the prophet Elijah would return to earth and prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah. ^jLiterally, *by her children*.”

CHAPTER 12

The Lord of the Sabbath

(1) Now at that time, Jesus was walking through the grainfields on the Sabbath. Meanwhile, His disciples became hungry and started picking some of the heads of grain and eating them. (2) But when the Pharisees saw this, they protested, “Look! Your disciples are doing something that is unlawful on the Sabbath.”

(3) At this, Jesus answered them, “Haven’t you read what David did when he and his men were hungry? (4) He went into the house of God, and he and his comrades ate the sacred bread—even though it was unlawful for them to eat it—it was only for the priests. (5) Or haven’t you read in the law that on the Sabbath, the priests in the temple desecrate the day and still remain innocent?^a (6) But I tell you that Someone^b greater than the temple is here!

(7) If you had known what this scripture means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’^c you would not have condemned the innocent. (8) For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

The Man with a Paralyzed Hand

(9) Now after Jesus left that place, He went into their synagogue, (10) where He met a man with a paralyzed^d hand. Then the Pharisees^e asked Jesus, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” (They wanted a reason to bring a legal charge against Him.) (11) But He replied, “Suppose one of you has a sheep, and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath. Won’t you take hold of it and lift it out? (12) And a human being^f is much more valuable than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”

(13) Then Jesus said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And when he stretched it out, it was completely restored—it was just as healthy as his other hand. (14) But the Pharisees went out and formed a plot to eliminate Jesus, (15) and when He became aware of this, He left that place.

Isaiah’s Servant Prophecy Fulfilled

Now many people followed Him, and He healed all their sick. (16) But He strictly warned them not to tell others Who He was. (17) So the words that were spoken by the prophet Isaiah were fulfilled:

(18) “Here is My Servant Whom I have chosen,
the One I love and in Whom My entire being delights.
I will put My Spirit on Him,
and He will announce judgment^g to the Gentiles.
(19) He will not quarrel or shout,
and no one will hear His voice in the streets.

(20) He will not break a crushed reed,
or extinguish a glimmering lamp—
until He brings judgment to victory.
(21) And in Him, the Gentiles will put their hope.”^h

Jesus and Beelzebub

(22) Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to Jesus. But after Jesus healed him, the man could speak and see, (23) and the people went wild with amazement. “Can this be the Son of David?”ⁱ they kept asking.

(24) Now as soon as the Pharisees heard these words, they replied, “It is only by Beelzebub,^j the prince of demons, that this Fellow is driving out demons.” (25) But Jesus realized what they were thinking, and He said to them, “Every kingdom that fights against itself is soon depopulated. And every town or family that fights against itself cannot last. (26) So if Satan is driving out Satan, he is fighting against himself, and how can his kingdom last?

(27) Furthermore, if I am driving out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your own disciples drive them out? Let them be your judges. (28) However, if I am driving out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has already come to you. (29) How can anyone enter a strong man’s house and steal his property without first tying up the strong man? Only then can he ransack his house.

(30) Anyone who is not with Me is against Me, and anyone who does not gather with Me is scattering. (31) Therefore, I tell you that every sin and blasphemy can be forgiven, but the blasphemy against the Spirit cannot be forgiven. (32) Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man can be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

The Fruit of Trees and People

(33) If you plant a good tree, its fruit will be good, but if you plant a bad tree,^k its fruit will be bad.^l You can always recognize a tree by its fruit. (34) You poisonous snakes! How can you evil people say anything good? For the words that the mouth speaks flow from what is in the heart. (35) A good person brings good things out of the good stored up in him, while an evil person brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. (36) Therefore, I tell you that on the day of judgment, people will have to give an account for every careless word they have spoken. (37) For by your words, you will be justified, and by your words, you will be condemned.”

The Sign of Jonah

(38) At this, some of the scribes and Pharisees answered Him, “Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from You.” (39) But Jesus responded, “An evil and

unfaithful generation keeps looking for a miraculous sign. However, the only sign that will be given to it is the sign of the prophet Jonah. (40) For just as Jonah was in the belly of the sea creature for three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.^m

(41) The men of Ninevah will rise up at the judgment with this generation, and they will condemn it. For they repented when Jonah preached to them, but Someone greater than Jonah is here! (42) The queen of the southⁿ will rise up at the judgment with this generation, and she will condemn it. For she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, but Someone greater than Solomon is here!

The Return of the Evil Spirit

(43) Whenever an evil spirit comes out of a person, it keeps wandering through dry places, looking for rest and not finding any. (44) Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ But when it arrives, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. (45) At this, it goes and brings seven other spirits along with it that are more evil than it is, and they all come into the house and settle down there. So that person’s final condition is worse than the first. And the same thing will happen to this evil generation.”

The True Family of Jesus

(46) While Jesus was still speaking to the crowds, His mother and brothers arrived and stood outside, waiting to talk with Him. (47) Then someone told Jesus, “Your mother and brothers are standing outside, and they want to talk with You.”^o (48) But He replied, “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?” (49) And pointing to His disciples, He said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! (50) Whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother!”

^aThe priests who served in the temple had more duties to perform on the Sabbath than on any other day. But their Sabbath work was acceptable because it was performed in the service of God. ^b Or *Something*—see also verses 41 and 42. ^c Hos. 6:6 (Septuagint) ^d Literally, *withered* ^e Literally, *Then they* ^f The Greek term that has been translated *human being, people, person, or person’s* in verses 12, 35, 36, 43, and 45 is gender inclusive. ^g Because of Jesus’ perfect life and sacrificial death, God’s court of judgment has passed an innocent verdict on the entire human race. See Rom. 5:18. This good news must be proclaimed to all the world’s people, and for all who believe it, God’s verdict of innocence becomes a reality. ^h Isa. 42:1-4 ⁱ Or *the Descendant of David?*—*the Son of David* is a Messianic title that refers to Jesus. ^j The Greek literally reads *Beelzeboul* or *Beezeboul*—see also verse 27. ^k Or *a rotten tree*, ^l Or *worthless*. ^m Jesus was using the rabbinic method of reckoning time. Jewish rabbis traditionally reckon a portion of a day as a full day and night. ⁿ The *queen of the south* was the queen of Sheba who visited Solomon. See 1 Kings 10:1-13 and 2 Chron. 9:1-12. ^o Some manuscripts omit verse 47.

CHAPTER 13

The Parable of the Sower

(1) That same day, Jesus left the house and sat down by the lake. (2) But such large crowds gathered around Him that He had to get into a boat to sit. And all the people stood on the shore (3) while He told them many things in parables: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. (4) And as he was scattering the seed, some of it fell along the road, and the birds came and ate it up. (5) Some of it also fell on rocky ground, where there wasn’t much soil. And since the soil was shallow there, it sprouted quickly. (6) But when the sun came up, the young plants were scorched, and they withered away because they had no roots. (7) Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked the young plants. (8) Still other seed fell on good soil, and it went on to produce a crop—100, 60, or 30 times what was sown. (9) Whoever has ears, let him hear!”

The Purpose of the Parables

(10) Later, the disciples came to Jesus and asked Him, “Why do You keep speaking to the people in parables?” (11) He replied, “The privilege of knowing the secrets about the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but it hasn’t been given to them. (12) The person who has something will be given more, and he will have plenty. But the person who has nothing will lose even the little he has. (13) So this is why I speak to the people in parables.

‘For they keep looking without seeing,
and listening without hearing or understanding.’

(14) Isaiah’s prophecy is being fulfilled in them:

‘You will keep listening, but never understand,
and you will keep looking, but never see.
(15) For this people’s mind has become dull;
their ears are hard of hearing,
and they have closed their eyes.
Otherwise, they would see with their eyes,
hear with their ears,
understand with their minds,
and turn to Me for healing.’^a

(16) But how blessed^b are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear! (17) For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you are seeing, but they did not see it, and to hear what you are hearing, but they did not hear it.

Jesus Explains the Parable of the Sower

(18) Now listen to what the parable of the sower means. (19) When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the meaning of the seed that fell along the road.

(20) The seed that fell on rocky ground represents the person who hears the word and accepts it at once with joy. (21) But since it develops no roots in him, his faith only lasts for a short time, and as soon as there is trouble or persecution because of the word, he quickly falls away.

(22) The seed that fell among thorns represents the person who hears the word, but the cares of this age and the false glamor of wealth choke the word, and it remains fruitless.

(23) However, the seed that fell on good soil represents the person who hears the word and understands it. He bears fruit and produces 100, 60, or 30 times what was sown.”

The Parable of the Weeds

(24) Here is another parable that Jesus presented to His disciples: “The kingdom of heaven is like a farmer who sowed good seed in his field. (25) But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed poisonous weeds^c among the wheat and then went away.

(26) Now when the wheat sprang up and produced heads of grain, the weeds appeared as well. (27) Then the farmer’s servants came to him and asked, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where have these poisonous weeds come from?’ (28) ‘An enemy did this!’ he replied. ‘Do you want us to go out and pull them up?’ the servants continued. (29) ‘No,’ the farmer told them. ‘If you pull up the weeds, you may pull up the wheat along with them. (30) Let them both grow together until the harvest. At harvest time, I will tell the reapers to collect the weeds first and tie them in bundles to be burned, and then to gather in the wheat and store it in my barn.’”

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

(31) Here is another parable that Jesus presented to them: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a man planted in his field. (32) A mustard seed is smaller than any other seed, but when it is grown, it is the largest plant of all. It becomes a tree, and the birds of the sky come and nest in its branches.”

The Parable of the Yeast

(33) Here is still another parable that He told them: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman mixed into three measures^d of flour until it worked its way all through the dough.”

(34) Jesus told the crowds all these things in parables. In fact, He didn’t say anything to them without using a parable. (35) So the words that were spoken by the prophet were fulfilled:

“I will open My mouth in parables;
I will proclaim things that have been hidden
since the creation of the world.”^e

Jesus Explains the Parable of the Weeds

(36) Then Jesus dismissed the people and went into the house. Afterward, His disciples came to Him and said, “Explain the parable about the weeds in the field to us.” (37) So Jesus replied, “The farmer who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. (38) The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the citizens of the kingdom. The weeds are those who belong to the evil one, (39) and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.

(40) Just as weeds are collected and burned with fire, so it will be at the end of the age. (41) The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will weed everything that leads to sin out of His kingdom, along with those who practice lawlessness. (42) The angels will throw them into a fiery furnace, where there will be crying and gnashing of teeth. (43) Then the righteous will shine like the sun in their Father’s kingdom. Whoever has ears, let him hear!

The Parable of the Treasure

(44) The kingdom of heaven is like hidden treasure in a field that a man found and buried again. Then in his joy, he went and sold everything he had and bought that field.

The Parable of the Pearl

(45) Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dealer looking for fine pearls. (46) When he found a pearl that was extremely precious, he went and sold everything he had and bought it.

The Parable of the Net

(47) Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a large net that was thrown into the lake and that brought in all kinds of fish. (48) When it was full, the fishermen hauled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and sorted the good fish into

baskets. But they threw the bad^f fish away.

(49) This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out and separate the wicked people from the righteous, (50) and they will throw the wicked people into a fiery furnace, where there will be crying and gnashing of teeth.”

(51) Then Jesus asked His disciples, “Do you understand all these things?” “Yes,” they replied. (52) And He continued, “This is why every scribe who has been disciplined for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who can derive both new things and old from his treasury.”

Nazareth Rejects Jesus

(53) When Jesus had finished these parables, He left that place (54) and went to His hometown, where He started teaching the people in their synagogue. And they were amazed and asked, “Where did this Fellow get such wisdom and such miraculous powers? (55) Isn’t this the carpenter’s Son? Isn’t Mary His mother, and aren’t His brothers, James, Joseph, Simon, and Jude?^g (56) Aren’t all His sisters here with us? Where did He get all this?”

(57) So they were deeply offended by Jesus. But He responded, “A prophet is always honored except in his hometown and among his own family members.” (58) And He didn’t perform many miracles there because of their unbelief.

^aIsa. 6:9-10 ^b Or *happy* ^c These weeds were probably bearded darnel. This plant closely resembles wheat, but it produces a black grain that is quite poisonous. ^d Literally, *three sats* (about ½ bushel) ^e Ps. 78:2—some manuscripts omit *of the world.* ^f Or *rotten* ^g Literally, *Judas—Jude* is a variant of Judas.

CHAPTER 14

Herod Murders John the Baptist

(1) At that time, Herod the tetrarch^a heard the reports about Jesus. (2) “It is John the Baptist!” he said to his servants. “He has been raised from the dead, and that explains why these miraculous powers keep energizing him.”

(3) Now Herod had arrested John—he had him chained up and put in prison—all because of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife. (4) For John had been telling Herod that it was unlawful for him to have her. (5) And even though Herod wanted to kill him, he was afraid of the people, because they looked on John as a prophet.

(6) But when the daughter of Heodias danced for the guests at Herod’s birthday

party, she pleased Herod so much (7) that he promised on oath to give her anything she requested. (8) Then, at her mother's urging, she replied, "Give me the head of John the Baptist, right here on a tray." (9) At this, the king was grieved, but because of his oaths and the guests who were reclining^b at the table with him, he gave orders for it to be given to her.

(10) So Herod had John beheaded in the prison. (11) His head was brought in on a tray and given to the girl, and she gave it to her mother. (12) Later, John's disciples came and took away his body and buried it. Then they went and reported the news to Jesus. (13) Now when Jesus heard what had happened, He left in a boat for a lonely place, where He could be by Himself.

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

But the people heard that He had left, and they followed Him on foot from their towns. (14) So Jesus saw a huge crowd as He emerged from the boat, and He had pity on them and healed their sick.

(15) When evening drew near, His disciples came to Him and said, "This is a lonely place, and the day is over. Send the people away, so they can go into the villages and buy food for themselves." (16) But Jesus replied, "You must give them something to eat." (17) At this, the disciples responded, "We have nothing here except five loaves of bread and two fish." (18) "Then bring them to Me," Jesus answered.

(19) And after He had directed the people to sit down on the grass, He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looked up to heaven and blessed them. Then He broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples. And the disciples distributed them to the people. (20) So they all ate until they were content, and the disciples collected twelve baskets full of the broken pieces that were left over. (21) About five thousand men ate this meal, not counting the women and children.

Jesus Walks on the Water

(22) Now as soon as the people were finished, Jesus insisted that His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side of the lake, while He dismissed the crowds. (23) And after He had sent them away, He went up on the mountainside by Himself to pray. (24) Meanwhile, the boat was already several miles^c from land, and it was being battered by the waves, because the wind was against it.

(25) Shortly before dawn,^d Jesus went out to His disciples, walking on the lake. (26) And when they saw Him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a phantom!"^e they shouted, and they screamed in fear. (27) But all at once, Jesus said to them, "Cheer up! It is I. Don't be afraid."

(28) Then Peter answered Him, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." (29) "Come on!" Jesus said. So Peter got down out of the

boat and walked toward Jesus on the water. (30) But when Peter noticed the wind,^f he was afraid, and as he began to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” (31) Immediately, Jesus reached out His hand and grabbed him. “You man of little faith,” He said, “why did you doubt?” (32) And as they got into the boat, the wind stopped blowing. (33) Then the men in the boat worshiped Jesus. “Truly You are the Son of God,” they said.

Jesus Heals the Sick in Gennesaret

(34) So they crossed the lake and came to shore at Gennesaret. (35) Now when the men recognized Jesus, they sent word to the entire region, and the people brought Him all who were sick. (36) And they kept begging Jesus to let the sick people simply touch the fringe of His robe. And all who touched it were completely healed.

^aThis was Herod Antipas. He was one of the sons of Herod the Great—the king who was ruling when Jesus was born. The term *tetrarch* indicates that he was the ruler over one of four districts in Palestine. ^bIn the time of Jesus, people who were attending a feast commonly reclined on couches as they ate. ^cLiterally, *many stadia*—one stadion equals 607 feet. ^dLiterally, *In the fourth watch of the night*—this is Roman terminology for the time between 3 A.M. and 6 A.M. ^eThe Greek term refers to something that is visible, but that has no physical reality. ^fSome manuscripts read *the strong wind*.

CHAPTER 15

Jesus Challenges Tradition

(1) Then a group of Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem approached Jesus and asked, (2) “Why do Your disciples keep breaking the tradition of the elders? They don’t wash their hands when they eat food.”^a

(3) “And why do you keep breaking God’s commandment for the sake of your tradition?” Jesus responded. (4) “God said, ‘Honor your father and mother,’^b and ‘Whoever curses his father or mother must be put to death.’^c (5) But you say that if a person tells his father or mother that the financial support he might have owed them has been given to God, (6) he doesn’t need to honor his father by helping him. So you have undermined the authority of God’s word for the sake of your tradition. (7) You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:

(8) ‘These people keep honoring Me with their lips,
but their hearts are far away from Me.
(9) They worship Me without purpose,
for the doctrines they teach are merely human^d rules.’”^e

(10) Then Jesus called the crowd to Him and said, “Listen to Me and understand this! (11) A person is not defiled by what goes into his mouth. No, a person is defiled by what comes out of his mouth.”

(12) Later, the disciples came to Him and asked, “Do you realize that the Pharisees were shocked when they heard what You said?” (13) But Jesus replied, “Every plant that My heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. (14) Leave them alone; they are blind guides.^f And if one blind man guides another blind man, they will both fall into the ditch.”

(15) Then Peter responded, “Explain this illustration to us.” (16) “Are you as dull as the others?” Jesus asked. (17) “Don’t you realize that whatever goes into the mouth goes into the intestines and on into the sewer? (18) But the things that come out of the mouth stem from the heart, and these are the things that defile a person. (19) Evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, stealing, false testimony, blasphemy—these all stem from the heart, (20) and these are the things that defile a person. However, eating with unwashed hands doesn’t defile anyone.”

A Phoenician Woman’s Faith

(21) Now when Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon, (22) a Phoenician woman^g from that district came out to meet Him. “Have mercy on me, Son of David, Sir!”^h she kept crying. “My daughter is severely demon-possessed!” (23) But Jesus made no reply to her.

Then His disciples came up and urged Him, “Send her away, for she keeps crying after us.” (24) So Jesus said to her, “I was only sent to the lost sheep of the nation of Israel.” (25) At this, the woman started kneeling before Him. “Help me, Sir!” she said. (26) But He responded, “It isn’t fair to take the children’s bread and toss it to the puppies.”

(27) “True enough, Sir,” she answered. “And yet the puppies eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.” (28) Then Jesus said to her, “Dear woman, you have great faith; what you desire will be done for you.” And from that very hour, her daughter was well.

Jesus Feeds the Four Thousand

(29) Now after Jesus left that region, He made His way along the Lake of Galilee and went up on a mountainside, where He sat down. (30) Huge crowds came to Him there, and with them were the lame, the blind, the injured, the mute, and many others. They were laid at His feet, and He healed them. (31) And when the people saw the mute speaking, the lame walking, and the blind seeing, they were amazed, and they praised the God of Israel.

(32) Then Jesus called His disciples to Him and said, “I feel sorry for these people. They have already been with Me for three days, and they have nothing to eat. I don’t want to send them away hungry, or they may faint on the way.” (33)

But the disciples replied, “Where can we get enough bread in this lonely place to feed such a crowd?” (34) “How many loaves of bread do you have?” Jesus asked. “Seven,” they answered, “and a few small fish.”

(35) At this, Jesus directed the people to sit down on the ground. (36) Then He took the seven loaves and the fish, and after He had given thanks, He broke them and gave them to His disciples. And the disciples distributed them to the people. (37) So they all ate until they were content, and the disciples collected seven baskets full of the broken pieces that were left over. (38) The number of men who ate this meal was four thousand, not counting the women and children. (39) And after Jesus had dismissed the people, He got into a boat and went to the region of Magadan.¹

^aThe issue here is ritualistic, not sanitary. ^b Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16 ^c Ex. 21:17; Lev. 20:9 ^d The Greek term that has been translated *human, person, or anyone* in verses 9, 11, 18, and 20 is gender inclusive. ^e Isa. 29:13 ^f Some manuscripts read *blind guides of the blind*. ^g Literally, *a Canaanite woman—the Phoenicians referred to themselves as Canaanites*. ^h Or *Descendant of David, Sir!*—the *Son of David* is a Messianic title that refers to Jesus. ⁱ Some manuscripts read *Magdala*.

CHAPTER 16

The Request for a Sign

(1) Some time later, the Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested Him by asking for a miraculous sign from heaven. (2) But He replied,^a (4) “An evil and unfaithful generation keeps looking for a miraculous sign. However, the only sign that will be given to it is the sign of Jonah.” And with that, He walked away and left them.

The Yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees

(5) Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread with them when they went across the lake. (6) So when Jesus said to them, “Keep your eyes open, and be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees,” (7) they started discussing His statement among themselves and concluded, “He said this because we didn’t bring any bread.”^b

(8) But Jesus was aware of their discussion. “Men of little faith,” He asked, “why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? (9) Don’t you understand even yet? Have you forgotten the five loaves that fed the five thousand and how many baskets you collected, (10) or the seven loaves that fed the four thousand and how many baskets you collected then? (11) How can you fail to

realize that I wasn't talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees!" (12) So they finally understood that He wasn't telling them to be concerned about the yeast used in bread, but to be on their guard against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Peter's Declaration of Faith

(13) Now when Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, "Who do people^c say the Son of Man is?" (14) And they replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

(15) "But what about you?" He continued. "Who do you say I am?" (16) Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ,^d the Son of the living God."

(17) "How blessed^e you are, Simon, son of Jonah!" Jesus exclaimed. "Flesh and blood did not reveal this to you; this was revealed by My Father in heaven. (18) And I tell you that you are Peter,^f and on this great rock,^g I will build My church,^h and the gates of death will not hold out against it. (19) I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven—whatever you forbid on earth has already been forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth has already been permitted in heaven."

(20) Then He gave His disciples strict orders not to tell anyone that He was the Christ.

Jesus Predicts His Death

(21) From that time on, Jesus began to explain to His disciples that He would have to go to Jerusalem and endure great suffering at the hands of the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and that He would be killed and then be raised to life on the third day.

(22) At this, Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. "May God spare You, Lord!" he said. "This will never happen to You!" (23) But Jesus turned around and said to Peter, "Get out of My way, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me. You are not thinking God's thoughts, but human thoughts."

(24) Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Anyone who wants to come after Me must deny himself and take up his cross and continue to follow Me. (25) Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of Me will find it. (26) What will anyone gain if he wins the whole world at the cost of his life? Or what can he give in exchange for his life? (27) For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father, with His angels, and then He will reward each person for what he has done.

(28) Truly I tell you, some of those standing here will not taste death until they have seen the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

^aSome manuscripts insert, “*When evening comes, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’ (3) And early in the morning, you say, ‘There will be bad weather today, for the sky is red and gloomy.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, so why can’t you interpret the signs of the times?*” ^bThe disciples thought that Jesus was telling them not to buy bread from the Pharisees and Sadducees. They were still concerned about their need for food, even though Jesus had miraculously provided food for vast numbers of people on two recent occasions. ^cThe Greek term that has been translated *people, human, or anyone* in verses 13, 23, and 26 is gender inclusive. ^dThe Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*—see also verse 20. ^eOr *happy* ^fOr *And I tell you that you are a rock*—the Greek term for *Peter* means *rock*. ^gA different Greek term is used here. This word refers to an enormous boulder or rock cliff. ^hOr *congregation*,

CHAPTER 17

The Transfiguration

(1) After six days, Jesus took Peter and the two brothers, James and John, and led them up a high mountain where they were alone. (2) And in their presence, He was transfigured—His face shone like the sun, and His clothing became as white as light. (3) Suddenly, Moses and Elijah appeared before them and began talking with Him.

(4) Then Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good that we are here. If You wish, I will put up three tents—one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” (5) But while he was speaking, a radiant cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is My Son, Whom I love, and I am pleased with Him. Continue listening to Him!”

(6) When the disciples heard this voice, they fell on their faces in mortal fear. (7) But Jesus came and touched them. “Get up,” He said. “Don’t be afraid.” (8) And when they looked up, there was no one there except Jesus.

The Question about Elijah

(9) Now on their way down the mountain, Jesus warned them, “Don’t tell anyone what you have seen until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.” (10) Then the disciples asked Him, “Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?”^a (11) Jesus replied, “Yes, Elijah must come and reform everything. (12) But I tell you that Elijah already came, and the people failed to recognize him—they treated him as they pleased. And in the same way, the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.” (13) Then they understood that He was talking to them about John the Baptist.

Jesus Heals a Boy with a Demon

(14) When they returned to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt down before Him. (15) “Sir,” he said, “have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic. He is suffering terribly, and he keeps falling into fire or into water. (16) I brought him to Your disciples, but they couldn’t heal him.” (17) “What a faithless and crooked generation!” Jesus exclaimed. “How much longer will I be with you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring the boy to Me.” (18) Then Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him. And from that very hour, the boy was well.

(19) Some time later, the disciples came to Jesus when He was alone and asked, “Why couldn’t we drive the demon out?” (20) “Because you have so little faith,” Jesus replied. “For truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”^b

Jesus Predicts His Death a Second Time

(22) When they were meeting together in Galilee, Jesus said to the disciples, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of human beings.^c (23) They will kill Him, but on the third day, He will be raised to life.” And the disciples were overcome with grief.

A Question about the Temple Tax

(24) Now after they arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the temple tax^d approached Peter and asked, “Doesn’t your Teacher pay the temple tax?” (25) “Yes, He does,” Peter responded. But when he came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak. “What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of this world collect tolls or taxes—from their own sons or from others?” (26) “From others,” Peter answered. “Well in that case, the sons are exempt,” Jesus said. (27) “However, since we don’t want to offend these people, go to the lake and cast in a fish-hook. Pull up the first fish you catch, and open its mouth, and there you will find a silver coin.^e Then take the coin and pay the tax for both of us.”

^aSee Mal. 4:5. On the basis of this scripture, it was commonly believed that the prophet Elijah would return to earth and prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah. ^b Some manuscripts insert (21) *But this kind of demon will only come out with prayer and fasting.* ^c The Greek term that has been translated *human beings* is gender inclusive. ^d Literally, *the two drachmas*—the double drachma was approximately twice the value of the Roman denarius. ^e Literally, *a stater*—the stater was worth four drachmas.

CHAPTER 18

True Greatness

(1) At that time, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” (2) So He called a little child and had him stand among them. (3) Then He said, “Truly I tell you, unless you turn around and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. (4) For whoever humbles himself like this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (5) And whoever welcomes a little child like this in My name is welcoming Me.

Woe to Those Who Tempt Others

(6) But if anyone leads one of these little ones who believe in Me into sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. (7) Woe to the world for tempting others! Yes, temptations are bound to come, but woe to the person^a through whom they come!

(8) So if your hand or your foot keeps leading you into sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life injured or lame than to keep two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. (9) And if your eye keeps leading you into sin, rip it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with only one eye than to keep both eyes and be thrown into fiery hell.

(10) See to it that you don’t look down on any of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels constantly gaze on the face of My Father in heaven.^b

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

(12) What do you think? Suppose someone owns 100 sheep, and one of them wanders off. Won’t he leave the 99 on the hills and go look for the one that strayed? (13) And if he finds it, I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the 99 that did not wander off. (14) In the same way, it is not the will of My^c Father in heaven for any of these little ones to be lost.

Dealing with Someone Who Does Wrong

(15) If your brother does something wrong,^d go and explain the problem to him while the two of you are alone. And if he listens to you, you have won your brother over. (16) But if he doesn’t listen, take one or two others along, so that every fact can be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.^e (17) If he refuses to listen to them, report the problem to the congregation. And if he even ignores the congregation, treat him like a pagan or a tax collector. (18) Truly I tell you, whatever you forbid on earth has already been forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth has already been permitted in heaven.

Christ's Presence with His People

(19) What is more, if two of you agree on earth to ask for anything, My Father in heaven will give it to you. (20) For wherever two or three have gathered in My name, there I will be among them.”

The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

(21) Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how often should I forgive my brother if he wrongs me? Up to seven times?”

(22) Jesus replied, “I do not say seven times, but 70 times seven.^f (23) For the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. (24) Now at the start of this process, one of them was brought in who owed him ten thousand talents.^g (25) And since the man had no means of repaying such a debt, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, his children, and everything he had, so the debt could be repaid.

(26) At this, the servant threw himself down at his master’s feet. ‘Be patient with me, and I will repay everything!’ he cried. (27) And his master was so moved with pity that he canceled the debt and let him go.

(28) But after that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him 100 denarii,^h and he grabbed him and started to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded.

(29) Then his fellow servant fell down and began pleading with him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will repay you!’ (30) But he refused and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay back the debt.

(31) Now the other servants were horrified when they saw what had happened, and they went to their master and reported the whole story. (32) Then he called the servant in and said, ‘You wicked scoundrel! I canceled all that debt of yours because you pleaded with me. (33) Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had mercy on you?’ (34) And in anger, his master handed him over to the jailorsⁱ until he could pay back everything he owed.

(35) So this is the way My heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.”

^aThe Greek term that has been translated *person/someone* in verses 7 and 12 is gender inclusive. ^b Some manuscripts insert (11) *For the Son of Man came to save the lost.* ^c Some manuscripts read *your.* ^d Some manuscripts read *If your brother wrongs you..* ^e Deut. 19:15 ^f Or *77 times.* ^g This vast sum of money was far more than anyone could repay. ^h In the time of Christ, this was the approximate amount of money that the average worker earned in four months. It was a sizable debt, but one that could be repaid. ⁱ Or *torturers*

CHAPTER 19

Jesus' Teaching about Divorce

(1) When Jesus had finished this parable, He left Galilee and went to the region of Judea^a on the other side of the Jordan River. (2) Huge crowds followed Him, and He healed them there.

(3) Then a group of Pharisees came to Jesus and tested Him. “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason?” they asked. (4) He replied, “Haven’t you read that the Creator made them male and female at the beginning?”^b (5) And He added, “‘For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother, and cling to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’^c (6) They are no longer two individuals, but one. So human beings^d must stop separating what God has joined together.”

(7) “Why then,” they asked, “did Moses establish a law that a man could hand his wife a written notice of divorce and send her away?”^e (8) “Moses allowed you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard,” Jesus responded. “But it wasn’t like that at the beginning. (9) And I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife for any reason other than sexual immorality is committing adultery if he marries another woman.”

(10) Then the disciples said to Him, “If this is the way it is between a husband and a wife, it is better not to marry.” (11) Jesus replied, “Not everyone is going to follow what you have suggested, but only those to whom the ability has been given. (12) For some people are unable to marry because they were born that way or because they were castrated by others. And then there are those who have renounced marriage for the kingdom of heaven. So if someone can follow your suggestion, let him follow it.”

Jesus and the Children

(13) Then some little children were brought to Jesus, so that He could lay His hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked the people who brought them. (14) At this, Jesus said, “Let the little children come to Me, and stop hindering them. For the kingdom of heaven belongs to children like these.” (15) And after He had laid His hands on them, He went on His way.

The Rich Young Man

(16) At that moment, a young man came up to Him and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to have eternal life?” (17) Jesus answered him, “Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One Who is good. But if you want to enter life, obey the commandments.” (18) “Which ones?” the young man asked. Jesus replied, “‘You must not murder;’ ‘You must not commit adultery;’ ‘You must not steal;’ ‘You must not give false testimony;’ (19) ‘Honor your father

and mother,^f and ‘You must love your neighbor as yourself.’^g

(20) But the young man kept persisting. “I have obeyed all these commandments; why am I still falling short?” (21) So Jesus told him, “If you want to be spiritually complete, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come back and follow Me.” (22) Now when the young man heard this, he went away with a broken heart, for he was very rich.

The Danger of Wealth

(23) Later, Jesus said to His disciples, “Truly I tell you, a rich person will have difficulty entering the kingdom of heaven. (24) I repeat—it is easier for a camel to squeeze through the eye of a sewing needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”

(25) When the disciples heard this, they were completely dumbfounded. “So who can be saved?” they asked. (26) Then Jesus gazed intently at them and said, “With human beings, salvation is impossible. But with God, everything is possible.”

The Disciples’ Reward

(27) Then Peter spoke up. “Look,” he said, “we left everything to follow You. What will there be for us?” (28) Jesus replied, “Truly I tell you, when the world has been re-created and the Son of Man sits on His glorious throne, you My followers will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (29) And anyone who left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother^h or children or fields for Me will receive 100 times as much and gain eternal life. (30) But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.”ⁱ

^aProbably *Judea* is used in a wider sense here, meaning *the country of the Jews*. ^b Gen. 1:27; 5:2 ^c Gen. 2:24 ^d The Greek term that has been translated *human beings/others* in verses 6, 12, and 26 is gender inclusive. ^e Deut. 24:1-3 ^f See Ex. 20:12-16; Deut. 5:16-20 ^g Lev. 19:18 (Septuagint) ^h Some manuscripts insert *or wife*. ⁱ This statement is explained by the parable in chapter 20.

CHAPTER 20

The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard

(1) “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out at dawn to hire workers for his vineyard. (2) And after he had agreed to pay them a denarius^a for the day, he sent them off to work.

(3) When he went out about nine o’clock,^b he saw other people standing in the

marketplace with nothing to do. (4) ‘You can go work in my vineyard as well,’ he told them, ‘and I will pay you whatever is fair.’ (5) So they also went to work.

Then he went out about noon^c and again about three o’clock^d and made the same offer. (6) Finally, he went out about five o’clock^e and found more people standing around. ‘Why have you been standing here all day doing nothing?’ he asked them. (7) ‘Because no one hired us,’ they replied. So he told them, ‘You can go work in my vineyard too.’

(8) Now as evening drew near, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with those who came last and going on to the first.’ (9) So the workers who were hired about five o’clock came forward, and they each received a denarius.

(10) At this, the workers who were hired first expected to get something more when they went forward. But they each received a denarius as well. (11) So they began to grumble against the landowner as they took their money. (12) ‘These last fellows only put in one hour,’ they said, ‘and yet you treated them the same as us, even though we had to endure the full weight of the day’s work and the scorching heat.’

(13) But the owner answered one of them, ‘Friend, I am not treating you unfairly. Didn’t you agree with me to work for a denarius?’ (14) Now take what is yours and be on your way. I want to pay those who were last the same thing I paid you. (15) Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you jealous because I am kind?’ (16) So in the same way, the last will be first, and the first will be last.”^f

Jesus Predicts His Death a Third Time

(17) Now as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve aside and spoke to them privately while they were on the road. (18) “We are going up to Jerusalem,” He said, “and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and scribes. They will condemn Him to death (19) and turn Him over to the Gentiles, to be mocked and flogged and crucified. But on the third day, He will be raised to life.”

A Mother’s Request

(20) Then the mother of James and John came to Jesus with her sons and knelt down to make a request. (21) “What do you want?” He asked her. And she replied, “Give me Your word that in Your kingdom, these two sons of mine will sit next to You—one on Your right and the other on Your left.” (22) “You don’t realize what you are requesting,” Jesus told them. “Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink?”^g “We can!” they answered.

(23) “Yes, you certainly will drink My cup,” Jesus responded. “But permission to sit on My right or My left is not Mine to give. These positions have already been

prepared for the people My Father has chosen.”

A Call to Servant Leadership

(24) When the other ten heard about this, they were angry with the two brothers. (25) So Jesus called them together and said, “You are aware that the Gentile rulers dominate their people, and their high officials make the people feel their authority. (26) But it must not be that way with you! Instead, whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, (27) and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave—(28) just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”

Jesus Heals Two Blind Men

(29) Now as Jesus and His disciples were leaving Jericho, a huge crowd followed Him. (30) Meanwhile, two blind men were sitting by the roadside when they heard that Jesus was going by. So they cried out, “Have mercy on us, Jesus, Son of David!”^h (31) At this, the crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet. But they shouted all the more, “Son of David, Sir! Have mercy on us!”ⁱ

(32) Then Jesus stopped and called them. “What do you want Me to do for you?” He asked. (33) “Sir,” they said, “we want to be able to see.” (34) So Jesus took pity on them and touched their eyes. And immediately, they regained their sight and followed Him.

^aThe denarius was a silver coin that was minted by the Romans. In the time of Christ, it was the usual daily wage for the average worker. ^b Literally, *about the third hour*; ^c Literally, *about the sixth hour* ^d Literally, *about the ninth hour* ^e Literally, *about the eleventh hour*—see also verse 9. ^f Some manuscripts add *For many are called, but few are chosen.* ^g Some manuscripts add *or endure the baptism that I am going to be baptized with?* ^h Or *Descendant of David!*—the *Son of David* is a Messianic title that refers to Jesus—see also verse 31. Some manuscripts read *“Have mercy on us, Son of David!”*, while others read, *“Son of David, Sir! Have mercy on us!”* ⁱ Some manuscripts read, *“Have mercy on us, Son of David!”*

CHAPTER 21

Palm Sunday—Jesus Enters Jerusalem in Triumph

(1) Now as they approached Jerusalem, they came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus sent two of His disciples (2) with the following instructions: “Go into the village ahead of you, and as soon as you enter it, you will find a donkey that has been tied with her colt beside her. Untie them and bring them to Me. (3) And if anyone says anything to you, tell him that their Lord needs them,

and that He will send them back right away.”

(4) This happened in order to fulfill what was said through the prophet:

(5) “Tell the people^a of Zion—
‘Look! Your King is coming to you.
He is gentle and riding on a donkey,
even on a colt, the offspring of a pack animal.’”^b

(6) So the disciples went on their way and did as Jesus had instructed them. (7) They brought the donkey and the colt, and after they had laid their robes on the backs of the animals, Jesus sat on them.

(8) Now an enormous crowd of people spread out their robes on the road, while others started cutting branches from the trees and scattering them on the road. (9) Then the people who were walking ahead of Jesus and those who were following Him began to shout:

“Hosanna^c to the Son of David!^d
How blessed is the One
Who is coming in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest!”^e

(10) When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city trembled with the wildest excitement. “Who is this?” the people asked. (11) And the crowd responded, “This is the Prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee.”

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

(12) Then Jesus went into the temple and drove out everyone who was buying and selling there.^f He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who sold doves. (13) “It is written,” He told them, “‘My house will be called a house of prayer.’”^g But you are making it a ‘den of robbers.’”^h (14) Afterward, the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. (15) But the chief priests and the scribes became angry when they saw the wonderful things He was doing and the children shouting in the temple, “Hosanna to the Son of David.”

(16) “Do You hear what they are saying?” they asked Him. “Yes,” Jesus replied. “Have you never read this scripture:

‘Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies,
You have provided Yourself with praise?’”ⁱ

(17) And with that, He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where He spent the night.

Jesus Curses the Fig Tree

(18) Early the next morning, Jesus became hungry on His way back to the city, (19) and He spied a lone fig tree by the roadside. But when He went over to it, He found nothing on it except leaves. So He said to the tree, “May you never bear fruit again!” And the fig tree withered away immediately.

(20) Now the disciples were amazed when they saw this. “How did the fig tree wither away so quickly?” they asked. (21) Jesus answered them, “Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what I did to the fig tree. You will even say to this mountain, ‘May you be plucked up and thrown into the sea,’ and it will happen. (22) If you believe, You will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”

Jesus’ Authority Questioned

(23) After Jesus had entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him while He was teaching and asked, “By what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?” (24) “I will also ask you a question,” Jesus responded. “And if you answer Me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. (25) Where did John’s baptism come from? Was it from heaven or from human beings?”

So they started discussing this question among themselves—“If we say ‘from heaven,’ He will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’ (26) But if we say, ‘from human beings,’ we have the people to fear. For they are all convinced that John was a prophet.”

(27) Finally, they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.” And He replied, “In that case, I will not tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

The Parable of the Two Boys^k

(28) But what do you think? There was a man who had two boys. And he came to the first one and said, ‘My boy, go work in the vineyard today.’ (29) ‘I don’t want to!’ the boy complained. Nevertheless, he felt sorry later and went. (30) Then the father came to the other boy and told him the same thing. ‘Yes, sir, I will!’ the boy answered, but he didn’t go. (31) Now which of the two boys did what his father wanted?” “The first one,” they replied.

Then Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. (32) For John came to show you the right way to live, and you didn’t believe him. But the tax collectors and prostitutes did, and even after you saw this, you still did not repent and believe him.

The Parable of the Wicked Farmers

(33) Now listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a fence around it, dug a winepress in it, and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to a group of farmers and went on a journey.

(34) But when the season for grapes drew near, the landowner sent his servants to collect his share of the fruit. (35) At this, the farmers grabbed his servants—they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. (36) So he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, but the farmers treated them the same way.

(37) Finally, the landowner sent his son to them. ‘Surely they will respect my son,’ he said. (38) But when the farmers saw the son, they said to each other, ‘This is the future owner. Come on, let’s kill him and get his inheritance!’ (39) And with that, they grabbed him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.

(40) Now when the owner of the vineyard returns, how will he treat those farmers?” (41) “He will miserably destroy those scoundrels!” they replied. “And he will rent the vineyard to other farmers who will pay him his share of the fruit at the proper season.” (42) Then Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the scriptures:

‘The Stone the builders rejected
turned out to be the main Cornerstone.
This was the Lord’s doing,
and it is remarkable in our eyes?’¹

(43) Therefore, I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who are producing its fruit. (44) Anyone who falls on this Stone will be broken to pieces, but if It falls on anyone, It will crush him into dust.”^m

(45) When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they realized that He was talking about them. (46) But even though they were trying to arrest Him, they were afraid of the crowds, because the people were convinced that Jesus was a prophet.

^aLiterally, *daughter*—the Holy Scriptures often utilize a female figure in depicting God’s people. ^bZech. 9:9 ^c*Hosanna* is a transliteration from the Aramaic. This expression literally means *Please save!* and can be understood as a prayer that salvation will come to Israel through Jesus. However, *Hosanna* also came to function as an exclamation of praise to God. It is likely that both of these meanings are present here. ^dOr *Descendant of David!*—*the Son of David* is a Messianic title that refers to Jesus—see also verse 15. ^ePs. 118:25-26 ^fSacrificial animals were sold in the outer court of the temple. However, these animals could only be purchased with the special temple currency. Consequently, people had to exchange their secular currency for this special money in order to purchase these animals. This practice provided the moneychangers with an opportunity to enrich

themselves by demanding an exorbitant exchange rate. ^g Isa. 56:7 (Septuagint) ^h Jer. 7:11 ⁱ Ps. 8:2 (Septuagint) ^j The Greek term that has been translated *human beings* in verses 25 and 26 is gender inclusive. ^k Some manuscripts reverse the order in the parable and place the disobedient boy first, followed by the obedient boy. ^l Ps. 118:22-23 (Septuagint) ^m This may be an allusion to Dan. 2:34-35, 44-45. Some manuscripts omit verse 44.

CHAPTER 22

The Parable of the Wedding Banquet

(1) Then Jesus spoke to them again in parables: (2) “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet^a for his son. (3) But when he sent his servants to summon the guests to the wedding, they refused to come. (4) So he sent more servants with a message for the guests: ‘Look, I have prepared my luncheon for you! My steers and fattened animals have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding!’ (5) But they paid no attention and went away—one to his field and another to his business. (6) Meanwhile, the rest of the guests grabbed the king’s servants and abused and killed them. (7) At this, the king became very angry, and he sent out his troops to destroy those murderers and burn their city.

(8) Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but my first guests were unworthy of the honor. (9) Now go out to where the roads leave town, and invite as many people as you can find to the banquet.’ (10) So the servants went out on the roads and brought in everyone they could find—both good and bad. And the wedding hall was filled with reclining guests.^b

(11) But when the king came in to inspect them, he noticed a man who was not wearing the wedding uniform. (12) ‘Friend,’ he asked, ‘how did you get in here without a wedding uniform?’ And the man had no reply. (13) So the king told his servants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him into outer darkness, where there will be crying and gnashing of teeth.’ (14) For many are called, but few are chosen.”

A Question about Paying Taxes

(15) Then the Pharisees went off and formed a plot to trap Jesus in His own words, (16) and they sent their disciples to Him along with the Herodians: “Teacher,” they said, “we know You are sincere. You are teaching us the way of God in honesty. And You don’t worry about anyone’s status, since You pay no attention to outward appearances. (17) So tell us what You think. Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?”

(18) But Jesus was aware of their wicked intentions, and He said to them, “Why are you trying to trap Me, you hypocrites? (19) Show Me the coin that is used for paying taxes.” And they brought Him a denarius.^d (20) “Whose picture and title are these?” He asked. (21) “Caesar’s,” they replied. “Well then,” Jesus said, “pay Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and God the things that are God’s.” (22) Now this answer stunned them completely, and they left Him and went away.

A Question about the Resurrection

(23) That same day, a group of Sadducees (who say there is no resurrection) also came to Jesus with a question. (24) “Teacher,” they said, “Moses told us that if a man who has no children dies, his brother must marry the widow and produce descendants^e for him.^f (25) Well there were once seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no descendants, he left his wife to his brother. (26) And the same thing happened to the second brother, to the third, and eventually to all seven. (27) Finally, the woman died as well. (28) Now at the resurrection, whose wife will she be, since she belonged to all seven of them?”

(29) Jesus answered them, “How far you have gone astray! You don’t understand the scriptures or the power of God. (30) People won’t marry at the resurrection; they will be like the angels in heaven.

(31) But as for the resurrection of the dead, have you never read what God said to you: (32) ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?’^g God isn’t the God of the dead, but of the living.” (33) And when the people heard His teaching, they were amazed by it.

A Question about the Law

(34) Now when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they met together in the same place as before.^h (35) Then one of them, an expert in the law, tried to trap Him with a question. (36) “Teacher,” he asked, “which is the greatest commandment in the law?” (37) Jesus replied, “‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind.’ⁱ (38) This is the first and greatest commandment. (39) And the second one is like it, ‘You must love your neighbor as yourself.’^j (40) All the law and the prophets are based on these two commandments.”

A Question about the Christ

(41) While the Pharisees were still meeting together, Jesus posed a question for them. (42) “What do you think about the Christ?”^k He asked. “Whose Descendant^l is He?” “David’s Descendant,” they replied. (43) But Jesus continued, “Then how could David, speaking by the Spirit, call Him Lord? For he said:

(44) ‘The Lord said to my Lord,
“Sit at My right hand,
until I put Your enemies,

under Your feet.”^m

(45) Now if David called Him Lord, how can He be David’s Descendant?” (46) And they were unable to give Jesus an answer. So from that day on, no one dared to ask Him any more questions.

^aThe Greek term that has been translated *wedding*, *wedding banquet*, or *banquet* in verses 2-4 and 9 is plural, probably because the feasting lasted several days. ^bIn the time of Jesus, people who were attending a banquet commonly reclined on couches as they ate. ^cThe Herodians were a Jewish political party that supported Herod Antipas and the Romans. If Jesus had opposed the payment of taxes to Caesar, the Herodians would have reported Him to Rome for treason. ^dThe denarius was a silver coin that was minted by the Romans. In the time of Christ, it was the usual daily wage for the average worker. ^eLiterally, *seed*—see also verse 25. ^fDeut. 25: 5-6 ^gEx. 3:6—the Sadducees accepted only the writings of Moses as inspired scripture. So Jesus met them on their own ground by pointing out that even Moses alluded to the resurrection. ^hThe Pharisees were probably meeting in the same place where they had formed the first plot against Jesus. See verse 15. ⁱDeut. 6:5 ^jLev. 19:18 (Septuagint) ^kThe Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. ^lOr *Son*—this applies to each use of *Descendant* in verses 42 and 45. ^mPs. 110:1

CHAPTER 23

Jesus Denounces the Scribes and Pharisees

(1) Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples: (2) “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat,^a (3) so always be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not follow their example, for they say one thing and do another. (4) They tie up heavy loads^b that are hard to carry^c and pile them on people’s^d shoulders, but they won’t lift a finger to remove them.

(5) They do everything to attract the attention of others: They enlarge the size of the scripture boxes^e they wear and lengthen the tassels on their robes. (6) They love the places of honor at formal dinners and the most prominent seats in the synagogues. (7) And how they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have people call them ‘Rabbi.’^f

(8) But you must not be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have only one Teacher, and all of you are brothers. (9) And you must not call anyone on earth ‘Father,’ for the only Father you have is in heaven. (10) Nor are you to be called ‘Master,’^g for you have only one Master—the Christ.^h (11) What is more, the person who is greatest among you must be your servant. (12) For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Woe to the Scribes and Pharisees

(13) But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You lock up the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. You are not going in yourselves, and when other people are going in, you stop them.ⁱ

(15) Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to make a single convert,^j and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.

(16) Woe to you, blind guides! You say, 'If anyone swears by the sanctuary, it means nothing. But if anyone swears by the gold in the sanctuary, he must fulfill his oath.' (17) You fools! You blind men! Which is more important, the gold, or the sanctuary that makes the gold holy? (18) You also say, 'If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing. But if anyone swears by the sacrifice on the altar, he must fulfill his oath.' (19) What blindness! Which is more important, the sacrifice, or the altar that makes the sacrifice holy? (20) So whoever swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. (21) Whoever swears by the sanctuary swears by it and by the One Who lives in it. (22) And whoever swears by heaven swears by God's throne and by the One Who sits on it.

(23) Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You pay your tithe^k on mint, dill, and cummin, but you have ignored the more important requirements of the law—justice, mercy, and faithfulness. It is these latter duties that you should have practiced, without neglecting the former ones. (24) Blind guides! You strain out a gnat and gulp down a camel!^l

(25) Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of your cups and dishes, but inside, they are full of greed and self-indulgence. (26) Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup,^m and then the outside will be clean as well.

(27) Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs that look beautiful on the outside, but on the inside, they are full of dead people's bones and every kind of filth. (28) In the same way, you look like righteous people on the outside, but on the inside, you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

(29) Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build up the tombs of the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. (30) And you say, 'If we had been living in the days of our ancestors,ⁿ we would never have been their partners in shedding the blood of the prophets.' (31) So by your own testimony, you are the descendants^o of the people who murdered the prophets. (32) Now go ahead and finish the work your ancestors began! (33) You snakes! You poisonous vipers! How can you escape the judgment of hell?

(34) This is why I am sending you prophets and scholars and scribes. You will kill and crucify some of them; others you will flog in your synagogues and chase

from town to town. (35) And as a result, you will be held accountable for all the righteous blood that has been shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. (36) Truly I tell you, this generation will be held accountable for all these murders.

Jesus Mourns Over Jerusalem

(37) O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You kill the prophets and stone those who have been sent to you. How often I have wanted to gather your children together, the way a bird gathers her young under her wings, but you wouldn't let Me. (38) Look, your house will be abandoned and left in ruins. (39) For I tell you that you will never see Me again until you say, 'How blessed is the One Who is coming in the name of the Lord!'"^p

^aIn other words, the scribes and Pharisees were the official interpreters of the law of Moses. ^b These *heavy loads* should probably be understood as the legalistic requirements of rabbinical tradition. ^c Some manuscripts omit *that are hard to carry*. ^d The Greek term that has been translated *people/people's* in verses 4, 7, and 13 is gender inclusive. ^e Literally, *phylacteries*—these were leather boxes containing scripture verses that were worn on the forehead and arm as an act of piety. ^f *Rabbi* literally means *my great one*. By extension, it came to mean *Teacher* or *Master*. ^g Or 'Leader,' or 'Teacher,' ^h The Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. ⁱ Some manuscripts insert (14) *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You devour the homes of widows and say long prayers to cover it up. This is why you will be punished more severely.* ^j Literally, *a single proselyte*—a Gentile convert to the Jewish faith ^k A *tithe* is 10% of a person's income. The Pharisees were so scrupulous that they paid every tenth leaf of their garden herbs as tithe. ^l The gnat and camel were looked on as the smallest and largest of the unclean animals. The Pharisees strained all their beverages to avoid swallowing even the smallest particle of unclean flesh. But they ignored the more important duties of the law. ^m Some manuscripts read *First clean the inside of the cup and the dish.* ⁿOr *fathers*—see also verse 32. ^o Or *sons* ^p Ps. 118:26 (Septuagint)—this statement marks the end of Jesus' public ministry.

CHAPTER 24

Jesus Predicts the Temple's Destruction

(1) Then Jesus left the temple, and as He was walking away, His disciples came to Him and called His attention to its buildings. (2) "Do you see all these buildings?" He asked. "Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; they will all be torn down."^a

Signs of the End

(3) Now as Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately and asked, “When will this happen? And what will be the sign of Your coming and the end of the age?”^b (4) Jesus replied, “See to it that no one deceives you. (5) For many will come in My name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ,’^c and they will deceive many people. (6) You are going to hear of wars and rumors of wars, but do not be afraid. These things are bound to happen, but the end is still to come. (7) Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines and earthquakes^d in one place after another. (8) But all these signs are only the first birth pains of the new age.

(9) Then you will be handed over for trial and execution, and all the nations will hate you because of Me. (10) At that time, many people will lose their faith, and they will betray one another and hate one another. (11) Many false prophets will also appear and deceive many people. (12) And as lawlessness gains the upper hand, the love of most of My disciples will grow cold. (13) But those who endure to the end will be saved.

(14) And this good news about the kingdom will be proclaimed in all the world,^e as a witness to all nations, and then the end will come.

The Abomination That Brings Desolation

(15) So when you see the abomination that brings desolation standing in the sanctuary, as prophesied by Daniel^f — the reader should be sure to understand this one — (16) then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. (17) If anyone is on a roof, he must not go down to get anything out of his house, (18) and if anyone is in a field, he must not turn back to get his clothing.

(19) How awful it will be for pregnant women and nursing mothers in those days. (20) And continue to pray that you won’t have to flee in winter or on the Sabbath. (21) For there will be great tribulation at that time. In fact, there has never been such a time from the beginning of the world until now, and there never will be again. (22) Moreover, if the duration of those days were not shortened, no one would be saved. But their duration will be shortened for the sake of God’s chosen ones.

(23) At that time, if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There He is!’ do not believe it. (24) For false christs and false prophets will appear, and they will produce great signs and wonders to deceive even God’s chosen ones, if that were possible. (25) Remember, I have warned you ahead of time. (26) So if people tell you, ‘He is out in the desert!’ do not go out, or ‘He is in the secret room!’ do not believe it. (27) For the coming of the Son of Man will be like the lightning that flashes from the east and shines to the west. (28) But wherever there is something dead, there the vultures will be gathered.^g

The Second Coming of Christ

(29) Now immediately after those days of tribulation,

‘the sun will be darkened,
the moon will lose its radiance,
the stars will fall from the sky,
and the cosmic powers will be shaken.’^h

(30) Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the peoples of the earth will mourn. For they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. (31) And He will send out His angels with a great trumpet blast, and they will gather His chosen ones from the four winds—from one end of the sky to the other.

The Timing of Christ’s Coming

(32) Now remember this illustration from the fig tree. When its twigs become tender and its leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is near. (33) And in the same way, when you see all these signs, you should know that the end is near. It is right at the door! (34) Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these signs have taken place. (35) The earth and the sky will pass away, but My words will never pass away!

(36) Yet no one knows when that day and hour will come—neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son Himself.ⁱ Only the Father knows.

(37) The time when the Son of Man comes will be like the days of Noah. (38) In the days before the flood, people were eating, drinking, and marrying until Noah entered the ark. (39) They did not realize what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. And this is exactly how it will be when the Son of Man comes. (40) At that time, two people will be in a field. One will be swept away and the other left. (41) Two women will be grinding at a mill. One will be swept away and the other left. (42) So stay awake, because you don’t know what day your Lord is coming.

(43) Remember—if the homeowner had known the time of night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not allowed his house to be burglarized. (44) So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man is coming at a time you are not expecting Him.

Two Kinds of Servants

(45) Who is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master put in charge of his household staff, to supply them with food at the proper time? (46) How blessed^j that servant will be when his master comes and finds him hard at work. (47) Truly I tell you, he will be put in charge of all his master’s property!

(48) But as for that wicked servant who tells himself that his master is staying away a long time, (49) and who begins to beat his fellow servants and to party with his drunken friends^k—(50) his master will come on a day when he does not expect him and at a time when he is not ready. (51) And the master will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be crying and gnashing of teeth.”

^aJesus’ prophecy was fulfilled at the conclusion of the Jewish-Roman War in A.D. 70, when the Roman army burned the temple and the city of Jerusalem. ^bIt seems that the disciples’ first question pertains to the destruction of the temple, while their second question pertains to Jesus’ second advent. ^cThe Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*—see also verses 23-24. ^dSome manuscripts read *famines, plagues, and earthquakes*. ^eThe Greek term that has been translated *world* refers to the inhabited world. ^fSee Dan. 8:13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11. ^gThe meaning of verse 28 is obscure. Jesus is probably referring to the deceived crowds who flock around the false christs and false prophets. ^hIsa. 13:10; 34:4; Joel 2:10 ⁱSome manuscripts omit *nor the Son Himself*. ^jOr *happy* ^kLiterally, *to eat and drink with the drunks*

CHAPTER 25

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

(1) “At that time, the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who got their lamps and went out to meet the groom.^a (2) And five of them were foolish, while the other five were wise.

(3) Now when the foolish ones got their lamps, they took no extra oil with them. (4) But the wise ones took bottles of oil along with their lamps. (5) And since the groom was a long time in coming, they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

(6) Finally, a loud cry rang out at midnight—‘Look, the groom is coming! Go out to meet him!’ (7) At this, the virgins all awoke and prepared their lamps. (8) Then the foolish ones said to the wise ones, ‘Our lamps are going out; give us some of your oil.’ (9) ‘Oh, no!’ they exclaimed. ‘There may not be enough for all of us! You need to go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’

(10) Meanwhile, the groom arrived as they were on their way to buy the oil. Then those who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet,^b and the door was locked. (11) Later, the other five also came to the banquet. ‘Sir! Sir!’ they cried. ‘Open the door for us!’ (12) But the groom replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I don’t know you.’

(13) So stay awake, because you don’t know the day or the hour.

The Parable of the Talents

(14) Again, the kingdom of heaven will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. (15) To one servant, he gave five talents^c of money, to another two, and to another one—each according to his ability. And after this, the man set out on his journey.

(16) Then the servant who had the five talents went quickly and invested them and earned five more. (17) The servant who had two talents did the same thing and earned two more. (18) But the servant who had one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

(19) Now after a long time, their master returned and settled accounts with them. (20) Then the servant who had received five talents came forward with another five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have earned five more for you.' (21) 'Well done, good and faithful servant!' his master replied. 'Since you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things. Come enjoy your master's happiness!' (22) Next, the servant who had received two talents came forward. 'Master' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents. See, I have earned two more for you.' (23) 'Well done, good and faithful servant,' his master replied. 'Since you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things. Come enjoy your master's happiness!'

(24) Finally, the servant who had received one talent came forward. 'Master,' he said, 'I know you are a harsh man. You reap where you didn't plant and gather where you didn't scatter seed. (25) I went out and hid your talent in the ground because I was afraid. See, here is what belongs to you!' (26) But his master answered him, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you know I reap where I didn't plant and gather where I didn't scatter seed? (27) Well then, you should have invested my money with the bankers, and when I returned, I would have gotten it back with interest.

(28) Now take the talent away from him and give it to the servant who has ten talents. (29) For those who have something will be given more, and they will have plenty. But those who have nothing will lose even the little they have. (30) And as for that worthless servant, throw him into outer darkness, where there will be crying and gnashing of teeth.'

The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats^d

(31) When the Son of Man comes in His glory, with all His angels, He will sit on His glorious throne. (32) Then all the nations will be assembled before Him, and He will separate the people from one another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. (33) And He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on His left.

(34) Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who have been blessed by My Father. Inherit the kingdom that has been ready for you since the

world began. (35) For I was hungry, and you gave Me food. I was thirsty, and you gave Me a drink. I was a foreigner, and you welcomed Me. (36) I needed clothes, and you clothed Me. I was sick, and you took care of Me. I was in prison, and you visited Me.’

(37) But the righteous will respond, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You a drink? (38) When did we see You as a foreigner and welcome You, or needing clothes and clothe You? (39) When did we see You in prison and visit You?’ (40) And the King will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, whenever you did something for the least of My brothers, you did it for Me.’

(41) Then He will say to those on His left, ‘Get away from Me, you who have been cursed, into the eternal fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels. (42) For I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat. I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink. (43) I was a foreigner, and you didn’t welcome Me. I was sick and in prison, and you didn’t visit Me.’

(44) But they will also respond, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or as a foreigner or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and refuse to help You?’ (45) And He will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, whenever you refused to do something for the least of these, you refused to do it for Me.’ (46) Then they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will enter eternal life.”

^aSome manuscripts read *the groom and the bride*. ^bThe Greek term that has been translated *wedding banquet* is plural, probably because the feasting lasted several days. ^cThe *talent* was an extremely large measure of money. It was worth six thousand denarii—the amount of money the average worker earned in 20 years. ^dThis was Jesus’ final parable.

CHAPTER 26

The Plot to Murder Jesus

(1) When Jesus had finished His discourse, He said to His disciples, (2) “As you know, in two days, it will be the Passover, and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.”

(3) At that time, the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest, (4) and formed a plot to arrest Jesus by treachery and kill Him. (5) “But it must not happen during the festival,” they kept insisting, “or there may be rioting among the people.”

A Woman Anoints Jesus with Perfume

(6) While Jesus was in Bethany, at the home of Simon, who once had leprosy,^a (7) a woman came up to Him with an alabaster bottle of very expensive perfume and poured it on His head as He was reclining^b at the dinner table. (8) Now the disciples became angry when they saw this. “Why such a waste!” they exclaimed. (9) “This perfume could have been sold for a fortune, and the money given to the poor.”

(10) But Jesus was aware of what they were saying, and He spoke to them about it. “Why are you upsetting this woman?” He asked. “She has done a beautiful thing for Me. (11) You will always have the poor with you, but you won’t always have Me. (12) When she poured this perfume on My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial. (13) And truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed throughout the world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.”

Judas Becomes an Enemy of Jesus

(14) Then one of the twelve—Judas, the man from Kerioth^c—went to the chief priests (15) and asked, “What are you willing to give me if I hand Him over to you?” And they gave him 30 silver coins.^d (16) So from that time on, Judas began to watch for a good opportunity to betray Jesus.

The Passover

(17) Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread,^e the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Where do You want us to prepare the Passover Seder for You?” (18) Then He told them to go into the city and give this message to a particular individual: “The Teacher says, ‘My time of destiny is near. I will celebrate the Passover Seder with My disciples at your home.’” (19) So the disciples did as He had instructed them and prepared the Seder.

(20) When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the dinner table with the twelve.^f (21) And while they were eating, He said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray Me.”

(22) Now they were heartbroken at this and began to ask Him one by one, “Lord, I’m not the person, am I?” (23) Jesus replied, “Someone who has been dipping his bread into the bowl with Me will betray Me. (24) The Son of Man is going to His fate, just as it is written about Him. But woe to the man who betrays Him! It would have been better for that man if he had never been born.”

(25) Then Judas, who was going to betray Him, asked, “Rabbi, I’m not the person, am I?” “You have spoken the very words!” Jesus responded.

The Lord's Supper

(26) While they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it. And after He had broken it, He gave it to the disciples and said, "Take this and eat it; this is My body."

(27) Then He took a cup, and after He had given thanks, He gave it to them and said, "Drink from it, all of you. (28) This is the blood of the covenant,^g which is being poured out on behalf of many people, for the forgiveness of their sins.

(29) Moreover, I tell you that from now on, I will never drink this product of the vine until the day I drink new wine with you in My Father's kingdom."

(30) And after they sang a hymn,^h they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial

(31) Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will stumble in your faith tonight because of Me. For it is written:

'I will strike the Shepherd,
and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'ⁱ

(32) But after I have been raised to life, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."

(33) At this, Peter answered Him, "Even if all the others stumble because of You, I never will!" (34) "Really?" Jesus replied. "Truly I tell you, before the rooster crows tonight, you will deny Me three times." (35) "Even if I have to die with You, I will never deny You!" Peter declared. And all the other disciples said the same thing.

Jesus Prays in Gethsemane

(36) Then Jesus and His disciples came to a plot of land called Gethsemane, and He said to them, "Sit down here while I go on ahead and pray." (37) And taking Peter and the two sons of Zebedee with Him, He began to grieve and to shrink back with a strange agitation. (38) "My entire being is overwhelmed with grief, even to the point of death," He told them. "So wait here and stay awake with Me."

(39) And going on a little farther, He fell on His face and prayed, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup of suffering pass by Me. Yet not My will, but Yours be done."

(40) Then He returned to the disciples and found them sleeping. And He said to Peter, "Couldn't you men stay awake with Me for one hour? (41) Now stay awake, and keep praying that you won't enter into temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

(42) After this, Jesus went away a second time and prayed, “My Father, if this cup of suffering cannot pass by Me until I drink it, may Your will be done.” (43) Then He returned again and found them still sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. (44) So He left them once more and went off to pray a third time, using the same words as before.

(45) Finally, He came back to the disciples and said to them, “You can continue sleeping and resting later on.^j Look, the time has nearly arrived for the Son of Man to be betrayed into the hands of sinners. (46) Get up! Let’s be going! Here comes My betrayer!”

Jesus Is Arrested

(47) While Jesus was still speaking, Judas, who was one of the twelve, arrived with a large crowd. The men were armed with swords and clubs, and they had been sent by the chief priests and elders of the people.

(48) Now the betrayer had given them a signal. “The Person I kiss is your Man,” He told them. “Arrest Him!” (49) And with that, he quickly stepped up to Jesus. “Hello Rabbi!” he said, and he kissed Him tenderly. (50) But Jesus responded, “Friend, why are you here?”^k Then the others moved forward to manhandle Jesus and arrest Him.

(51) Suddenly, one of Jesus’ followers drew his sword and struck the high priest’s servant, cutting off his ear. (52) “Put your sword away!” Jesus told him. “For everyone who takes up the sword will perish by the sword. (53) Or don’t you realize that I could call on My Father, and He would immediately send more than twelve legions^l of angels to help Me? (54) But in that case, how would the scriptures be fulfilled that say everything must happen in this way?”

(55) Then Jesus said to the crowd, “Did you come out with swords and clubs to capture Me because you took Me for a robber? Day after day, I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest Me. (56) But all this has happened so that the writings of the prophets can be fulfilled.”

Now at that point, all the disciples deserted Him and fled.

The Trial before Caiaphas

(57) Then the men who had arrested Jesus led Him away to the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. (58) Meanwhile, Peter was following Jesus at a distance, and when he reached the high priest’s courtyard, he went inside and sat down with the guards, to find out how everything would end.

(59) Now the chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin^m were trying to find false evidence against Jesus that would justify a death sentence. (60) But even though many false witnesses came forward, they failed to find any. Finally, two men came

forward (61) and declared, “This Fellow said, ‘I can destroy God’s sanctuary and rebuild it in three days.’”ⁿ (62) Then the high priest stood up and asked Jesus, “Don’t You have an answer? What about the accusation these men are bringing against You?” (63) But Jesus remained silent.

So the high priest said to Him, “I am putting You under oath before the living God. Tell us if You are the Christ,^o the Son of God.” (64) “Yes, I am,” Jesus answered, “although the words are yours. Nevertheless, I am telling all of you—in the future, you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of the sky!”

(65) At this, the high priest tore his clothing.^p “Blasphemy!” he cried. “Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, you have just heard His blasphemy! (66) What is your verdict?” And they all responded, “He deserves to die.” (67) Then they spit in His face and hit Him with their fists. Others slapped Him (68) and said, “Prophecy to us, Christ! Who hit You?”

Peter Denies Jesus

(69) Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard when a servant girl approached Him. “You were also with Jesus, the Galilean,” she said. (70) But he denied it in front of everyone. “I don’t know what you’re talking about,” he replied.

(71) Afterward, he went out to the gate, where another servant girl saw him. “This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth,” she said to the people there. (72) And once again, he denied it with an oath. “I don’t know the Man!” he exclaimed.

(73) A little later, the people who were standing there came up to Peter and said, “Obviously, you are one of them as well, for your accent gives you away.” (74) Then he began to curse and swear. “I don’t know the Man!” he yelled.

Just then a rooster crowed, (75) and Peter remembered how Jesus had said, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” And he went outside and cried bitterly.

^aThe term *leprosy* was probably used for several different skin diseases. ^bIn the time of Jesus, people who were attending a feast commonly reclined on couches as they ate. See also verse 20. ^c*Kerioth* was a town in southern Judea. ^dprobably 30 silver shekels ^eOr *the first day of Unfermentation*. ^fSome manuscripts read *the twelve disciples*. ^gSome manuscripts read *the new covenant*. For the significance of the new covenant, see Jer. 31:31-34. ^hprobably *the Hallel* (Ps. 113-118) ⁱZech. 13:7 ^jOr “*Are you still sleeping and resting?*” ^kOr “*Friend, do what you came here for!*” ^lA Roman legion consisted of six thousand infantry and 700 cavalry. ^mThe Great Sanhedrin (or Great Council) functioned as the highest Jewish court. ⁿSee John 2:18-22. ^oThe Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*—see also verse 68. ^pIt was a common practice for pious Jews to tear their clothing when they heard someone blaspheme the name of God. However, the high priest was forbidden to do this. See Lev. 21:10.

CHAPTER 27

Jesus Is Taken to Pilate

(1) When it was early morning, all the chief priests and elders of the people met together to sentence Jesus to death. (2) And after they had tied Him up, they led Him off and handed Him over to Governor Pilate.^a

Judas Commits Suicide

(3) Then Judas, the betrayer, realized that Jesus was condemned, and he deeply regretted what he had done. So he returned the 30 silver coins to the chief priests and elders. (4) “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood!” he said. But they replied, “What is that to us? You’ll have to deal with that yourself.”

(5) At this, Judas threw the silver coins into the sanctuary and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.

(6) Now the chief priests picked up the money and said, “It is unlawful to put this into the temple treasury, since it was a prize for blood.” (7) And after some discussion, they decided to use it to buy the potter’s field as a burial ground for foreigners. (8) So this is why that field has been called “The Field of Blood” to the present day.

(9) Then the words that were spoken by the prophet Jeremiah were fulfilled:

“I^b took the 30 pieces of silver—
the price at which He was valued
by the people of Israel—
(10) and used them to buy the potter’s field,
as the Lord directed me.”^c

The Trial before Pilate

(11) So Jesus was brought before the governor, who questioned Him closely. “Are You the King of the Jews?” he asked. “Yes, I am,” Jesus answered, “although the words are yours.” (12) But when He was accused by the chief priests and elders, He made no reply. (13) “Don’t You hear how many charges they are bringing against You?” Pilate asked Him. (14) However, to the governor’s great surprise, Jesus refused to answer even a single charge.

(15) Now during the festival, it had been the governor’s custom to release a particular prisoner the people wanted freed. (16) And at that time, his officials had an infamous prisoner named Jesus Barabbas^d in custody. (17) So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, “Which man do you want me to release for you—Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus, Who is called the Christ?”^e (18) (He asked

this question because he knew they had handed Jesus over to him out of jealousy.)

(19) Meanwhile, Pilate was sitting on the judgment seat when his wife sent him this message: "Leave that righteous Man alone, for I suffered terribly in a dream about Him last night." (20) But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to demand Barabbas and to have Jesus killed.

(21) Then the governor asked them, "Which of the two men do you want me to release for you?" "Barabbas!" they answered. (22) "Well what should I do with Jesus, Who is called the Christ?" Pilate asked. And they all responded, "Crucify Him!" (23) "But why? What has He done wrong?" Pilate continued. At this, they started screaming at the top of their voices, "Crucify Him!"

Pilate Sentences Jesus to Death

(24) When Pilate realized that he was getting nowhere and that a riot was developing, he took some water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this Man's blood,"^f he said. "You will have to answer for it." (25) Then all the people shouted back, "Let His blood be on us and on our children!"

(26) So Pilate released Barabbas for them. But he had Jesus flogged with a leaded whip and handed Him over to be crucified.

Jesus Is Crowned with Thorns

(27) Then Pilate's soldiers took Jesus into the governor's palace^e and gathered the whole battalion against Him. (28) They stripped Him, draped a scarlet army robe around Him, (29) and braided a crown of thorns, which they placed on His head. And after they had put a staff in His right hand, they knelt down before Him and mocked Him. "Hail, King of the Jews!" they sneered. (30) Then they spit on Him and started using the staff to beat Him over the head.

The Crucifixion

(31) When they had finished their mockery, they took the robe off Him, dressed Him in His own clothes, and led Him away to be crucified. (32) But as they were leaving, they came across a man from Cyrene^h named Simon, and they forced him to carry Jesus' cross.

(33) Finally, they arrived at a place called Golgothaⁱ (which means The Place of a Skull). (34) And even though they offered Jesus some wine that had been mixed with a bitter drug, He refused to drink it once He had tasted it.^j

(35) Now after the soldiers had crucified Him, they gambled for His clothes by casting lots.^k (36) Then they sat down to keep Him under guard, (37) and they also put a sign above His head that listed the written charge against Him:

“THIS IS JESUS,
THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

The Dying Jesus Is Insulted

(38) Now there were two robbers who were crucified with Him—one on His right and the other on His left. (39) And the people who were passing by kept insulting^l Him. They shook their heads (40) and said, “So You’re the One Who’s going to destroy the sanctuary and rebuild it in three days! If You’re the Son of God, save Yourself and come down from the cross!”

(41) The chief priests kept mocking Him as well, along with the scribes and elders. (42) “He saved others,” they said, “but He can’t save Himself. So He’s the King of Israel, is He? Then let Him come down from the cross, and we’ll believe in Him! (43) So He trusts in God, does He? Well let God rescue Him if He cares about Him! For He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”

(44) And even the robbers who were crucified with Him kept insulting Him in the same way.

The Death of Jesus

(45) Then darkness came over the entire land^m from noonⁿ until three o’clock.^o (46) And about three o’clock, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?”—which means, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”^p

(47) At this, some of the people who were standing there spoke up. “He’s calling Elijah!”^q they exclaimed. (48) Then one of them ran quickly and got a sponge that he soaked in wine vinegar, and he held it up on the end of a stick for Jesus to drink.^r (49) But the rest of them kept telling him to wait. “Let’s see if Elijah is coming to save Him,” they said.^s (50) Then Jesus gave another cry and yielded up His life.

(51) Suddenly, the curtain in the sanctuary was ripped from top to bottom, and the earth shook, and huge boulders split apart. (52) At that moment, the tombs broke open, and the bodies of many holy people were raised from sleep^t (53) and came out of the tombs after Jesus’ resurrection. And they went into the holy city and appeared to many of its residents.

(54) Now when the centurion^u and the other soldiers who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and everything else that was happening, they were terrified. “This Man really was the Son of God!” they exclaimed.

(55) And many women who had followed Jesus from Galilee to provide for His needs were also there, watching from a distance. (56) Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary (the mother of James and Joseph), and the mother of Zebedee’s sons.

Jesus Is Buried

(57) As evening drew near, a wealthy man from Arimathea^v whose name was Joseph, and who was a disciple of Jesus, (58) went to Pilate to ask for Jesus' body. And Pilate gave instructions for it to be handed over to him.

(59) So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth. (60) Then he laid it in his own new tomb that he had carved out of solid rock. And after he had rolled a large stone against the tomb's entrance, he went away. (61) All the while, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary^w were sitting there across from the tomb.

Soldiers Guard Jesus' Tomb

(62) Now in the morning, after Preparation Day,^x the chief priests and the Pharisees met together with Pilate. (63) "Sir," they said, "we remember the words that Deceiver spoke while He was still alive—"After three days, I will rise again." (64) So give an order for the tomb to be guarded until the third day. Otherwise, His disciples may come and steal the body, and then tell the people that He was raised from the dead. If that happens, the final deception will be worse than the first one!" (65) "You can have the soldiers as guards," Pilate responded. "Go and make the tomb as secure as you know how." (66) So they went out and secured the tomb by placing a seal on the stone in the presence of the guards.

^aSome manuscripts read *Pontius Pilate*. ^bOr *They* ^cSee Jer. 32:6-9; Zech. 11:12-13. This is a very free quotation that combines elements from both of these passages.

^dSome manuscripts read *Jesus Barabbas* in verses 16-17, while many others simply read *Barabbas*. It seems probable that early Christian scribes suppressed the full name, *Jesus Barabbas*, out of reverence for Jesus Christ. ^eThe Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*—see also verse 22. ^fSome manuscripts read "*I am innocent of this righteous Man's blood*,".

^gLiterally, *the Praetorium* ^h*Cyrene* was a Libyan city in north Africa. ⁱ*Golgotha* is an Aramaic term that means *skull*. ^jIt was customary to offer crucifixion victims drugged wine to ease their pain. ^k*Lots* were small pebbles or sticks that were used in games of chance. ^lOr *kept blaspheming* ^mOr *earth* ⁿLiterally, *the sixth hour* ^oLiterally, *the ninth hour*—see also verse 46. ^pJesus was quoting Ps. 22:1 in Aramaic. ^qThe people misunderstood Jesus' words in verse 46 and thought He was calling Elijah. ^rRoman soldiers often drank wine vinegar mixed with water, which was considered a refreshing beverage. ^sSome manuscripts insert *And another man took a lance and pierced His side, and water and blood came out*. ^tFor Matthew, *sleep* was a euphemism for death. ^uA centurion was a commander of approximately 100 Roman soldiers. ^v*Arimathea* is the Greek transliteration of *Ramah*. However, there were several towns in Palestine named Ramah, and it is uncertain which one was intended. ^wThe *other Mary* was the mother of James and Joseph. Compare verse 56 with Mark 15:47. ^x*Preparation Day* is the Jewish term for Friday, the day before the Sabbath.

CHAPTER 28

Jesus Rises from the Dead

(1) When the Sabbath was over, and dawn was breaking on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary^a went to look at the tomb. (2) Suddenly, there was another great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven. And going to the tomb, he rolled the stone away and sat on it. (3) The angel's face was as bright as lightning; his clothing was as white as snow, (4) and the guards were so afraid of him that they trembled and fell to the ground like dead men.

(5) But the angel said to the women, "Don't be afraid. I am aware that you are looking for Jesus, Who was crucified. (6) He is not here, for He has risen, just as He told you! Come and see the place where He was lying.^b (7) Then hurry and tell His disciples, 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee, where you will see Him.' Now remember what I have told you."

(8) At this, the women quickly left the tomb, and as they ran with fear and great joy to take the news to the disciples, (9) Jesus suddenly met them. "Greetings!" He said. Then they went up to Him and held onto His feet as they worshiped Him. (10) "Don't be afraid!" He told them. "But go and tell My brothers to leave for Galilee, where they will see Me."

The Chief Priests Bribe the Soldiers

(11) While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and told the chief priests everything that had happened. (12) Then the chief priests met with the elders and devised a plan. They gave the soldiers a large amount of money (13) and said, "Tell the people that His disciples came during the night and stole His body while you were sleeping. (14) And if the governor hears about this, we'll put things right with him and make sure you have nothing to worry about."

(15) So the soldiers took the money and did as they were told. And their story has been widely circulated among the Jews to the present day.

The Great Commission

(16) Afterward, the eleven disciples went back to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus planned to meet them. (17) And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him, although some had doubts.

(18) Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.^c (19) So go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, (20) and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you

through all the days to come—to the end of the age.”^d

^aThe *other Mary* was probably the mother of James and Joseph. See Matt.27:56. ^bSome manuscripts read *where the Lord was lying*. ^cAn allusion to Dan. 7:14 ^dSome manuscripts conclude with the word *Amen*.

STUDY GUIDE

- (1) Why was it important for Jesus to be a Descendant of David and of Abraham? (*Gen. 22:15-18; 2 Sam. 7:4-17; Matt. 1:1-17*)
- (2) Why was it important for Jesus to be born in Bethlehem? (*Mic. 5:2; Matt. 2:1-6*)
- (3) Why was it important for Jesus to grow up in the Galilean town of Nazareth? (*Isa. 9:1-7; 11:1-5; Matt. 2:21-23*)
- (4) Why was Satan so intent on tempting Jesus? (*Matt. 4:1-11; 2 Cor. 5:21*)
- (5) Could Jesus have given in to temptation and sinned? If the answer is yes, was the plan of salvation in jeopardy? If the answer is no, why did Satan bother to tempt Him? (*Matt. 4:1-11*)
- (6) Should we take oaths in court? (*Matt. 5:33-37; 26:63-64*)
- (7) Did Jesus forbid self-defense? (*Matt. 5:38-39*)
- (8) Will only a few people be saved? (*Matt. 7:13-14; Rev. 7:9-17*)
- (9) Why do you think Jesus invited a tax collector to follow Him? (*Matt. 9:9*)
- (10) How should Christians relate to people who have low morals? (*Matt. 9:10-13*)
- (11) What is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? Why can't it be forgiven? (*Matt. 12:31-32*)
- (12) Why did Jesus at first refuse and then grant the request of the Phoenician woman? (*Matt. 15:21-28*)
- (13) What is the rock on which the church is built? (*Matt. 16:17-18*)
- (14) What are the keys to the kingdom of heaven? (*Matt. 16:19*)
- (15) Why did Peter find Jesus' death so unthinkable? (*Matt. 16:21-23*)

- (16) What was Jesus' attitude toward divorce and remarriage? (*Matt. 19:1-12*)
- (17) Does Jesus require us to give up all our possessions? (*Matt. 19:21-22*)
- (18) What does the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard teach us about salvation? (*Matt. 20:1-16*)
- (19) How did the events of Palm Sunday fulfill prophecy? (*Zech. 9:9; Matt. 21:1-11*)
- (20) Are the Jews still God's chosen people? (*Matt. 21:43-44; Rom. 11:1-29*)
- (21) Can we hasten Jesus' return by sharing the good news with others? (*Matt. 24:14; 2 Pet. 3:12*)
- (22) Why hasn't God told us the exact time Jesus will return? (*Matt. 24:36*)
- (23) The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats stresses the importance of good works. If salvation is by grace alone, what is the role of works? (*Matt. 25:31-46; Rom. 3:19-31; James 2:14-26*)
- (24) Why was the curtain in the temple ripped when Jesus died? (*Matt. 27:51; Heb. 10:19-20*)
- (25) Is it really possible for a dead person to be resurrected? (*Matt. 28:1-15*)
- (26) Why is Jesus' resurrection so important for the Christian Faith? (*Matt. 28:1-15; 1 Cor. 15*)

Mark

CHAPTER 1

The Coming of John the Baptist

(1) This is the beginning of the good news about Jesus Christ.^a (2) It was just as the prophet Isaiah had written:

“I am sending My messenger ahead of You,
and he will prepare Your way.^b

(3) A voice is crying in the desert,
‘Prepare the way for the Lord!
Make His paths straight!’^c”

(4) So John appeared in the desert, preaching a baptism of repentance, for the forgiveness of sins. (5) And people were coming out to him from the entire region of Judea and Jerusalem, and were being baptized in the Jordan River as they confessed their sins.

(6) John was dressed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts^d and wild honey. (7) Now this is what he proclaimed: “The One Who is coming after me is more powerful than I am, and I am unworthy to stoop down and loosen the straps on His sandals. (8) I have baptized you with^e water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

John Baptizes Jesus

(9) In those days, Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee to be baptized by John in the Jordan River. (10) And just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, John^f saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit coming down on Him like a dove. (11) Then a voice came from heaven: “You are My Son, Whom I love, and I am pleased with You.”

Satan Tempts Jesus

(12) Immediately, the Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert, (13) where He remained for 40 days, while Satan was tempting Him. He was with the wild animals, and angels were caring for His needs.

Jesus Begins His Ministry

(14) Now after John had been arrested, Jesus went into Galilee proclaiming the good news from God.^g (15) “The time is fulfilled,” He said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”

Jesus’ First Disciples

(16) While Jesus was making His way along the Lake of Galilee, He noticed

Simon and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. (17) “Come and follow Me,” Jesus told them, “and I will make you fish for people.”^h (18) So they left their nets and followed Him at once.

(19) Then He continued on a little farther and noticed James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John, who were in a boat, repairing their nets. (20) But as soon as He called them, they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired workers and followed Him.

Jesus Drives Out a Demon

(21) Afterward, they went to Capernaum, and as soon as the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. (22) Now the people were amazed at His teaching, for unlike the scribes, He taught them with authority.

(23) Suddenly, a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, (24) “What common ground is there between us, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know Who You are—the Holy One of God!” (25) But Jesus rebuked the spirit. “Be quiet and come out of him!” He ordered. (26) At this, the evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a great scream.

(27) Then all the people were amazed, and they kept asking one another, “What is this? A new teaching with authority to back it up! He even commands the evil spirits, and they obey Him!” (28) So news about Jesus spread quickly throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

Jesus Visits Simon and Andrew’s Home

(29) Later, theyⁱ left the synagogue and went directly to the home of Simon and Andrew with James and John. (30) Now Simon’s mother-in-law was lying in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her right away. (31) So He went over to her and held her hands as He raised her to her feet. Then the fever left her, and she began caring for their needs.

(32) That evening at sunset, people started bringing everyone who was sick or demon-possessed to Jesus, (33) and the whole town gathered at Simon’s door. (34) So Jesus healed a large number of people with various diseases and drove out many demons. But He banned the demons from speaking, because they knew Who He was.

(35) The next morning, Jesus got up very early, while it was still dark, and He went out to a lonely place and began to pray. (36) Then Simon Peter and his companions tracked Him down (37) and found Him. “Everyone is looking for You!” they exclaimed. (38) But Jesus replied, “Let’s move on to the nearby villages, so I can preach there too. For this is why I came.” (39) And He went all over Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

Jesus Heals a Man with Leprosy

(40) On one occasion, a man with leprosy^j came to Jesus and knelt down as he begged for help.^k “If You want to, You can make me clean,” he said. (41) At this, Jesus was filled with pity, and He reached out His hand and touched the man. “I want to,” He answered. “Be clean!” (42) And immediately, the leprosy left the man, and he was cured.

(43) Then Jesus gave him a stern warning and sent him away quickly (44) with these words: “See to it that you don’t tell anyone about this. But go and show yourself to the priests, and offer what Moses commanded for your cleansing,^l as proof to them that you are cured.”

(45) But the man went out and began to publicize the whole story, spreading the word far and wide. And as a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly. Instead, He remained outside in lonely places, and people kept coming to Him from all directions.

^aSome manuscripts read *Jesus Christ, the Son of God*. The Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. ^b Mal. 3:1 ^c Isa. 40:3 (Septuagint) ^d Although the Greek term that has been translated *locusts* usually denotes insects, an old tradition dating back to the early church fathers suggests that in this verse, the term refers to carob pods. The matter is still debated. ^e Or *in*—this applies to each use of *with* in verse 8. ^f Literally, *he* ^g Some manuscripts read *the good news about the kingdom of God*. ^h The Greek term that has been translated *people* is gender inclusive. ⁱ Some manuscripts read *He*. ^j The term *leprosy* was probably used for several different skin diseases. ^k Some manuscripts simply read *On one occasion, a man with leprosy came to Jesus and begged for help*. ^l See Lev. 14:1-32.

CHAPTER 2

Jesus Heals a Paralyzed Man

(1) When Jesus returned to Capernaum several days later, the people heard that He was home. (2) And so many of them gathered together that there was no more room, not even in front of the door.

Now as He was preaching to them, (3) a paralyzed man was brought to Him. This man was being carried by four other men, (4) but they couldn’t get him to Jesus because of the crowd. So they removed part of the roof above Jesus’ head and lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on through the hole they had made. (5) When Jesus noticed their faith, He said to the paralyzed man, “Friend,^a your

sins are forgiven!”

(6) But some of the scribes were sitting there, thinking to themselves, (7) “Why is this Fellow talking like that? He’s blaspheming! Only God can forgive sins!”

(8) At once, Jesus was inwardly aware of what they were thinking, and He asked them, “Why are you harboring these thoughts in your minds? (9) Is it easier to say to the paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, pick up your mat, and walk?’ (10) But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” And with that, He said to the paralyzed man, (11) “I tell you, get up, pick up your mat, and go home!”

(12) Then the man got up, picked up his mat without delay, and walked out right in front of them all. And everyone went wild with amazement, and they praised God. “We have never seen anything like this!” they exclaimed.

Levi Becomes a Disciple

(13) When Jesus went out to the lakeshore again, all the people started coming to Him, and He began to teach them. (14) Now as He was walking along, He saw Levi,^b the son of Alphaeus, sitting in a tax collector’s booth. “Follow Me!” Jesus told him. And Levi got up and followed Him.

(15) Some time later, Jesus was reclining^c at a feast in Levi’s home, and many tax collectors and “sinners” were eating with Jesus and His disciples. For a large number of these people were following Him. (16) Now when the scribes who belonged to the Pharisee party saw Jesus eating with “sinners” and tax collectors, they asked His disciples, “Why is He always eating with tax collectors and ‘sinners’?” And Jesus heard what they were saying.

(17) “Healthy people don’t need a doctor,” He told them. “But sick people do. I didn’t come to call righteous people, but sinners.”

A Discussion about Fasting

(18) On one occasion, John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Then a group of them came to Jesus and asked, “Why do John’s disciples and the Pharisees’ disciples continue to fast, but Your disciples never fast?” (19) Jesus responded, “Surely the wedding guests cannot fast while the groom is still with them. As long as they have him with them, there can be no fasting. (20) But the time is coming when the groom will be taken away from them, and when that time arrives, they will fast.

(21) No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old robe. If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old one and leave a bigger hole. (22) And no one pours new wine^d into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and then the wine and the skins will both be ruined. No, new wine goes into new wineskins.”

The Lord of the Sabbath

(23) Now Jesus was walking through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples started picking the heads of grain as they were making a path. (24) Then the Pharisees asked Him, “Why are they doing something that is unlawful on the Sabbath?”

(25) At this, Jesus answered them, “Have you never read what David did when he and his men were hungry and in need? (26) In the time of Abiathar, the high priest, he went into the house of God and ate the sacred bread—even though it was unlawful to eat it—it was only for the priests. And he also gave some to his comrades.”

(27) Then Jesus went on to tell them, “The Sabbath was made for human beings, not human beings for the Sabbath.^e (28) So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”

^aLiterally, “*Child*,” ^bIt seems that *Levi* was also known as *Matthew*. See Matt. 9:9-13. ^cIn the time of Jesus, people who were attending a feast commonly reclined on couches as they ate. ^dThe term *new wine* refers to unfermented or slightly fermented grape juice. If grape juice was poured into an old wineskin, the fermenting juice would produce gases, causing the weakened wineskin to burst. Only aged wine that was no longer fermenting could be stored in old wineskins. ^eOr “*The Sabbath was made for the man, not the man for the Sabbath*.” This may be an allusion to the first man. See Gen. 2:7.

CHAPTER 3

The Man with a Paralyzed Hand

(1) When Jesus entered the synagogue again, a man with a paralyzed^a hand was there. (2) Now the leaders were watching Jesus closely to see if He would heal on the Sabbath. (For they wanted to bring a legal charge against Him.)

(3) Then Jesus said to the man with the paralyzed hand, “Get up and come to the middle of the synagogue.” (4) And Jesus asked the leaders, “Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath or to do evil, to save life or to take it?” But they remained silent.

(5) Now after He had looked around at them with anger and grief because of their hard hearts, He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” So the man stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. (6) At this, the Pharisees went out and immediately began plotting with the Herodians^b to eliminate Jesus.

Many People Follow Jesus

(7) Then Jesus withdrew to the lakeside with His disciples, and a huge crowd from Galilee followed Him. Many people also came from Judea, (8) Jerusalem, Idumea, the other side of the Jordan River, and the region around Tyre and Sidon when they heard what He was doing. (9) So He told His disciples to keep a small boat ready for Him in case the crowd started to crush Him. (10) For He healed so many sick people that those who had diseases kept pushing against Him as they tried to touch Him. (11) And every time the evil spirits saw Him, they fell down before Him and screamed, “You are the Son of God!” (12) But He repeatedly gave them strict orders not to reveal who He was.

The Twelve Apostles

(13) Later, Jesus went up into the mountains and called the men He wanted together. So they came to Him, (14) and He appointed twelve of them to be His companions, designating them “apostles”.^c It was His plan to send them out to preach, (15) and to have authority to drive out demons. (16) Now these were the twelve He appointed:^d Simon (whom He named Peter); (17) the sons of Zebedee, James and his brother John (whom He named Boanerges,^e which means Sons of Thunder); (18) Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew,^f Matthew,^g Thomas, James, the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus,^h Simon the Zealot,ⁱ (19) and Judas, the man from Kerioth,^j who later betrayed Jesus.

Jesus and Beelzebub

(20) Then Jesus entered a house, and once again, such a crowd gathered that He and His disciples couldn’t even eat. (21) Now when His family heard about this, they set out to take charge of Him. For people kept saying, “He’s out of His mind!” (22) And the scribes who had come down from Jerusalem kept insisting, “He is possessed by Beelzebub!^k He drives out demons by the prince of demons!” (23) So Jesus called them over to Him and started using illustrations to speak to them: “How can Satan drive out Satan? (24) If a kingdom fights against itself, that kingdom cannot last. (25) And if a family fights against itself, that family cannot last. (26) So if Satan rises up against himself and fights himself, he can’t last either. His end has come! (27) No one can enter a strong man’s house and ransack his property without first tying up the strong man. Only then can he ransack his house.

(28) Truly I tell you, people^l will be forgiven for every sin and blasphemy they commit. (29) But whoever commits blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven. He is guilty of an eternal sin.”^m (30) Jesus made this comment because they were saying that He had an evil spirit.

The True Family of Jesus

(31) Then Jesus’ mother and brothers arrived and stood outside while they sent someone to call Him. (32) Now a crowd was gathering around Him when word

was brought that His mother and brothersⁿ were outside looking for Him. (33) “Who are My mother and My brothers?” He responded. (34) And looking at the people who were sitting in a circle around Him, He said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! (35) Whoever does God’s will is My brother and sister and mother!”

^aLiterally, *withered* ^bThe Herodians were a Jewish political party that supported Herod Antipas and the Romans. ^c Some manuscripts omit *designating them “apostles”*. ^d Some manuscripts omit *Now these were the twelve He appointed*. ^e *Boanerges* is an obscure Hebrew expression that seems to mean *Sons of Thunder*. ^f *Bartholomew* means *son of Talmai*. His personal name was probably *Nathanael*. See John 1:45-51. ^g It seems that *Matthew* was also known as *Levi*. Compare Matt. 9:9-13 with Mark 2:14-17 and Luke 5:27-32. ^h It seems that *Thaddaeus* was also known as *Judas*. See Luke 6:16; John 14:22, and Acts 1:13. ⁱ The *Zealots* were an extremist political group that called for violent rebellion against Rome. ^j *Kerioth* was a town in southern Judea. ^k The Greek literally reads *Beelzeboul* or *Beezeboul*. ^l The Greek term that has been translated *people* is gender inclusive. ^m Some manuscripts read *He is liable to eternal judgment*. ⁿ Some manuscripts read *His mother, brothers, and sisters*.

CHAPTER 4

The Parable of the Sower

(1) Once again, Jesus started teaching by the lakeside. But the crowd that gathered around Him was so large that He had to get into a boat and sit in it, while all the people were on the shore, facing the lake. (2) And He taught them many things in parables.

Now in the course of His teaching, He went on to say: (3) “Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. (4) And as he was scattering the seed, some of it fell along the road, and the birds came and ate it up. (5) Some of it also fell on rocky ground, where there wasn’t much soil. And since the soil was shallow there, it sprouted quickly. (6) But when the sun came up, the young plants were scorched, and they withered away because they had no roots. (7) Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked the young plants, so that they produced no grain. (8) Still other seed fell on good soil and went on to produce a crop. It came up and grew, and the yield was 30, 60, or 100 times what was sown.” (9) Then He added, “whoever has ears to hear, let him hear!”

The Purpose of the Parables

(10) Later, when Jesus was alone, the twelve and the other people around Him began inquiring about the parables. (11) “The secret about the kingdom of God has been given to you,” He told them. “But to those on the outside, everything

comes by way of parables, (12) so that

‘they can always be looking, but never seeing,
and always be hearing, but never understanding.
Otherwise, they might repent and be forgiven!’^{77a}

Jesus Explains the Parable of the Sower

(13) Then Jesus asked them, “Don’t you understand this parable? How will you understand any of the parables if you can’t grasp this one? (14) The farmer sows the word. (15) The seed that fell along the road represents the people in whom the word is sown. But as soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them.

(16) The seed that fell on rocky ground represents the people who hear the word and accept it at once with joy. (17) But since it develops no roots in them, their faith only lasts a short time, and as soon as there is trouble or persecution because of the word, they quickly fall away.

(18) The seed that fell among thorns represents another group of people who hear the word. (19) But the cares of this age, the false glamor of wealth, and desires for other things come in and choke the word, and it remains fruitless.

(20) However, the seed that fell on good soil represents the people who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit—30, 60, or 100 times what was sown.”

A Lamp under a Basket

(21) Then Jesus asked them, “Do you bring in a lamp and put it under a measuring basket^b or under a bed? Don’t you put it on a lampstand? (22) Everything that is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and everything that is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. (23) If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.

(24) And pay attention to what you hear!” He added. “The measure you give will be the measure you receive—and even more will be given to you. (25) For the person who has something will be given more, but the person who has nothing will lose even the little he has.”

The Parable of the Growing Seed

(26) Then Jesus went on to say, “The kingdom of God can be compared to a man who scatters seed on the ground. (27) And regardless of whether he sleeps at night or gets up during the day, the seed sprouts and grows tall. Yet he doesn’t know how. (28) All by itself, the earth produces crops—first the green shoot, then the head, then the full grain in the head. (29) Finally, when the crops are ripe, he makes quick use of the sickle, for the harvest has come.”^c

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

(30) How can we picture the kingdom of God?” Jesus continued. “What parable can we use to describe it? (31) It is like a mustard seed, which is smaller than any other seed that is planted in the ground. (32) But once it is planted, it springs up and becomes the largest plant of all, and it produces such big branches that the birds of the sky can nest in its shade.”

Jesus' Use of Parables

(33) Jesus used many other parables like these to speak the word to the people, as far as they could grasp it. (34) He never spoke to them without using a parable, but He explained everything to His disciples in private.

Jesus Calms a Storm

(35) Now when evening came that day, Jesus said to His disciples, “Let’s cross over to the other side of the lake.” (36) So they left the crowd behind and took Him along in the boat where He was already sitting, and some other boats accompanied Him. (37) But a violent windstorm came up, and the waves kept breaking into the boat until it was almost swamped.

(38) Meanwhile, Jesus was sleeping on the cushion in the back of the boat when the disciples roused Him. “Teacher!” they said, “don’t You care that we’re going to drown?” (39) Then Jesus got up and rebuked the wind, and He said to the lake, “Hush! Be still!” At this, the wind died down, and there was a great calm.

(40) “Why are you so afraid?” He asked them. “Don’t you have any faith yet?” (41) But they were terrified and started asking one another, “Who is this Man? Even the wind and the lake obey Him!”

^aIsa. 6:9-10 ^b The Greek term refers to a measuring container with an approximate volume of ¼ bushel. ^c This seems to be an allusion to Joel 3:13.

CHAPTER 5

Jesus and the Demons

(1) Now they arrived in the region of the Gerasenes,^a on the other side of the lake. (2) And as soon as Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came out of the burial caves to meet Him. (3) This man was living in the burial caves, and no one could restrain him any longer, not even with a chain. (4) He had often been restrained with fetters and chains, but he tore the chains apart and smashed the fetters on his feet. And no one was strong enough to control him. (5) So

night and day, among the burial caves and hills, he was constantly screaming and cutting himself with stones. (6) But when he saw Jesus in the distance, he ran and fell down before Him. (7) “What common ground is there between You and me, Jesus, Son of God Most High?” he screamed. “In God’s name, please don’t torture me!” (8) For Jesus was already saying, “Come out of that man, you evil spirit!”

(9) Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” “My name is Legion,^b because there are so many of us,” he answered. (10) And he began imploring Jesus not to send them out of the region.

(11) Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. (12) So the demons begged Jesus, “Send us into the pigs, and let us enter them.” (13) At this, He gave them permission, and the evil spirits came out of the man and went into the pigs. Then the herd of about two thousand pigs rushed over the cliff into the lake and was drowned.

(14) With that, the herdsmen ran off and reported the news in the town and on the farms, and the people went out to see what had happened. (15) So they came to Jesus and saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons. He was sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. (16) Then the herdsmen who had seen the miracle gave them a detailed description of what had happened to the demon-possessed man and the pigs, (17) and the people started begging Jesus to leave their region.

(18) Nevertheless, as He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed kept pleading to go with Him. (19) But Jesus wouldn’t hear of it. “Go home to your family,” He said, “and tell them what the Lord in His mercy has done for you.” (20) So the man went off to the Decapolis,^c and began to proclaim what Jesus had done for Him. And everyone was amazed.

A Dead Girl and a Sick Woman

(21) Now after Jesus had returned by boat^d to the other side of the lake, a huge crowd gathered around Him along the lakeshore. (22) Then one of the synagogue leaders by the name of Jairus^e arrived, and as soon as he saw Jesus, he fell at His feet (23) and pleaded desperately with Him. “My little daughter is nearly dead,” he said. “Please come and put Your hand on her, so her life can be saved.”

(24) At this, Jesus started off with the man, and He was accompanied by a huge crowd of people that kept pushing against Him. (25) Among them was a woman who had been suffering from severe bleeding for twelve years. (26) She had endured great suffering under the care of many doctors, and even though she had spent all her money on them, instead of getting better, she had become worse. (27) But after she heard about Jesus, she came up behind Him in the crowd and touched His robe. (28) For she kept saying, “If I can just touch His clothes, I will be healed.” (29) And immediately, the source of her bleeding dried up, and she knew within herself that she had been freed from her suffering.

(30) Now Jesus was instantly aware that power had gone out from Him, so He turned around in the crowd and began asking, “Who touched My clothes?” (31) “You see the crowd pushing against You,” His disciples responded, “and yet You ask, ‘Who touched Me?’” (32) But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it.

(33) Then the woman came up to Him with fear and trembling because she realized what had happened to her, and she fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. (34) “Daughter, your faith has healed you,” Jesus replied. “Go in peace, and may you always be free from your suffering.”

(35) While He was still speaking, some messengers came from the synagogue leader’s home and said, “Your daughter is dead. Why are you bothering the Teacher?” (36) But Jesus ignored^f what they were saying and told the synagogue leader, “Don’t be afraid! Just believe!”

(37) From that point on, He refused to allow anyone to accompany Him except Peter, James, and James’ brother John. (38) Then they arrived at the synagogue leader’s home, where Jesus found total confusion, with people crying and wailing loudly. (39) So He went in and asked them, “Why all this hysterical crying? The child isn’t dead; she is only sleeping.” (40) And with that, they began laughing at Him.

But after He had sent them all outside, He led the child’s father and mother and His own disciples into the room where she was. (41) Then He took her by the hand and said, “Talitha koum!”—which means, “Little girl, I’m telling you to get up!” (42) And immediately, she got up and started walking around, for she was twelve years old.^g

Now her parents^h were overwhelmed with wonder, (43) but Jesus gave them strict orders not to let anyone know about this. And He also told them to give her something to eat.

^aSome manuscripts read *Gergesenes*; others read *Gadarenes*. ^b A Roman legion consisted of six thousand infantry and 700 cavalry. The name *Legion* indicates that a large number of demons had taken control of the man. ^c The Decapolis was an autonomous association of Greek-speaking towns, originally ten in number. ^d Some manuscripts omit *by boat*. ^e Some manuscripts omit *by the name of Jairus*. ^f Some manuscripts read *But Jesus heard*. ^g The girl’s age is probably mentioned to indicate that she was old enough to walk. ^h Literally, *Now they*

CHAPTER 6

Nazareth Rejects Jesus

(1) Then Jesus left Capernaum^a and went to His hometown, and His disciples followed Him. (2) When the Sabbath came, He began teaching in the synagogue, and the large congregation that heard Him asked in amazement, “Where did this Fellow learn these things? What is this wisdom He has been given, and what about these miracles He performs? (3) Isn’t this the Carpenter, the Son of Mary? Isn’t He the Brother of James, Joseph,^b Jude,^c and Simon? Aren’t His sisters here with us?” So they were deeply offended by Him.

(4) But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is always honored except in his hometown and among his own relatives and family members.” (5) And He couldn’t perform a miracle there, except to put His hands on a few sick people and heal them. (6) In fact, He was amazed at their unbelief. Then He continued traveling around to the other villages on His teaching circuit.

Instructions for the Twelve

(7) Now after He had called the twelve together, He began sending them out two by two. And He gave them authority over evil spirits (8) and instructed them to take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no traveling bag, and no copper coins in their belts. (9) They could wear sandals, but no extra shirt.

(10) Then He went on to tell them, “When you enter a home, stay there until you leave that place. (11) And if any town refuses to welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a warning to them.”

(12) So the twelve set out to preach repentance to the people, (13) and they drove out many demons and anointed many others who were sick and healed them.

Herod Murders John the Baptist

(14) Now King Herod^d heard about this, for the name of Jesus had become well-known. In fact, some of the people were saying,^e “John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and this explains why these miraculous powers keep energizing Him.” (15) Other people were saying, “He is Elijah,” while still others were saying, “He is a prophet, like one of the ancient prophets.”

(16) But when Herod heard these reports, he declared, “This must be John, whom I beheaded. He has been raised from the dead!”

(17) Now Herod had sent soldiers out to arrest John and put him in prison—all because of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, whom he had married. (18) For John had been telling Herod that it was unlawful for him to have his brother’s

wife. (19) So Herodias was furious with John and wanted to kill him. But she was unable to do it (20) because Herod held John in awe and kept him safe. He knew John was a righteous man, and he enjoyed listening to him, although the things he heard perplexed him greatly.

(21) Finally, Herodias found her opportunity on Herod's birthday, when he gave a dinner party for his high officials, military commanders, and the leading people of Galilee. (22) On that occasion, the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, and she pleased Herod and his guests who were reclining^f at the table with him. Then the king said to the girl, "Ask me for anything you want, and I will give it to you!" (23) And he promised her on oath, "I will give you anything you request—up to half of my kingdom!" (24) So she went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?" "The head of John the Baptist!" Herodias replied.

(25) With that, the girl quickly returned to the king and made her request: "I want you to give me the head of John the Baptist on a tray at once." (26) Now the king was very sad, but because of his oaths and the guests who were reclining there, he could not bring himself to refuse her. (27) So he immediately sent a guard with orders to bring John's head. At this, the guard went off and beheaded John in the prison. (28) Then he brought the head back on a tray and gave it to the girl, and she presented it to her mother.

(29) When John's disciples heard what had happened, they came and took away his body and laid it in a tomb.

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

(30) Meanwhile, the apostles gathered around Jesus and gave Him a report about everything they had done and taught. (31) Then He said to them, "Come away with Me to a quiet place, where you can be alone and get a little rest." For such large numbers of people were coming and going that Jesus and the apostles had no time even to eat.

(32) So they left in a boat for a lonely place, where they could be by themselves. (33) But many people recognized them when they saw them leaving, and these people hurried on foot from all their towns and arrived there ahead of them. (34) So Jesus saw a huge crowd as He emerged from the boat, and He had pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And He started teaching them many things.

(35) Now since it was already becoming late, His disciples came to Him and said, "This is a lonely place, and the day is over. (36) Send the people away, so they can go to the surrounding farms and villages and buy something to eat." (37) But Jesus replied, "You must give them something to eat." "That would take eight months' wages!"^g they exclaimed. "How can we buy that much bread for them to eat?"

(38) “How many loaves of bread do you have?” Jesus asked. “Go and see.” So they found out and told Him, “Five, and two fish.” (39) Then He directed the disciples to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass.

(40) And after they were seated in garden-like rows of hundreds and fifties, (41) He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looked up to heaven and blessed them. Then He broke the loaves into pieces and continued giving them to the disciples to place before the people. And He also divided up the two fish for everyone. (42) So they all ate until they were content, (43) and the disciples collected twelve baskets full of broken pieces of bread and fish. (44) The number of men who ate this meal was five thousand.

Jesus Walks on the Water

(45) Now as soon as the people were finished, Jesus insisted that His disciples get into the boat and cross over to Bethsaida ahead of Him, while He dismissed the crowd. (46) And after He had told the people good-bye, He went off into the mountains to pray. (47) Meanwhile, it had become late, and the boat was in the middle of the lake, while He was alone on land.

(48) Shortly before dawn,^b He noticed that His disciples were in great distress, for they were rowing against the wind. So He went out to them, walking on the lake, and He would have passed them by. (49) But when they saw Him walking on the lake, they screamed because they thought He was a phantom.ⁱ (50) For they were all terrified when they saw Him.

But Jesus promptly spoke to them. “Cheer up!” He said, “It is I. Don’t be afraid.” (51) Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind died down. At this, they were completely dumfounded, (52) for they had not understood the miracle of the loaves because their minds were closed.^j

Jesus Heals the Sick in Gennesaret

(53) So they crossed the lake and came to shore at Gennesaret, where they secured the boat. (54) And as soon as they stepped out on land, they were recognized immediately. (55) Then the people rushed all over the countryside and started bringing the sick on mats to any place they heard Jesus was. (56) So wherever He went—to villages, towns, or farms—the people laid their sick in the marketplaces and kept begging Him to let the sick people simply touch the fringe of His robe. And all who touched Him were healed.

^aLiterally, *Then Jesus left there*—He had just been in Capernaum. ^b Literally, *Joses*—*Joses* is a variant of Joseph. ^c Literally, *Judah*—*Jude* is a variant of Judah or Judas. ^d This was Herod Antipas. He was one of the sons of Herod the Great—the king who was ruling when Jesus was born. ^e Some manuscripts read *In fact, Herod was saying*. ^f In the time of Jesus, people who were attending a feast commonly reclined on couches as they ate. See also verse 26. ^g Literally, *200 denarii!*—200 denarii was the amount of money that the average worker in the

time of Christ earned in eight months. ^h Literally, *About the fourth watch of the night*,—this is Roman terminology for the time between 3 A.M. and 6 A.M. ⁱ The Greek term refers to something that is visible, but that has no physical reality. ^j Jesus' disciples still didn't realize that His miracles were signs pointing to Who He was—God in human flesh.

CHAPTER 7

Jesus Challenges Tradition

(1) Then the Pharisees gathered around Jesus, along with a group of scribes who had come from Jerusalem, (2) and they noticed that some of His disciples were eating food with defiled hands—that is, without ceremonially washing them. ^a (3) (For the Pharisees and all the Jews follow the tradition of the elders and refuse to eat without washing their hands. ^b (4) What is more, when they come from the marketplace, they never eat without sprinkling themselves, ^c and they follow many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers, and kettles. ^d)

(5) So the Pharisees and the scribes asked Jesus, “Why don't Your disciples follow the tradition of the elders, instead of eating their food with defiled hands?” (6) He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites. It is written:

‘These people keep honoring Me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from Me.

(7) They worship Me without purpose,
for the doctrines they teach are merely human ^e rules.’ ^f

(8) You have abandoned God's commandments, while you cling to human tradition.”

(9) Then Jesus added, “You are quite good at setting aside God's commandments, so you can hold on to your traditions. (10) For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and mother,’ ^g and ‘Whoever curses his father or mother must be put to death.’ ^h (11) But you say that if a person tells his father or mother that the financial support he might have owed them is ‘Corban’ ⁱ (that is, a gift dedicated to God), (12) he is no longer allowed to do anything to help his parents. (13) So you keep undermining the authority of God's word by the tradition you have received. And you do many other things like that.”

(14) Then Jesus called the crowd to Him again and said, “Listen to Me, everyone, and understand this! (15) Nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile him. No, a person is defiled by what comes out of him.” ^j

(17) Now after He had left the crowd and had gone into the house, His disciples asked Him about this illustration. (18) “Are you as dull as the others?” He

responded. “Don’t you realize that a person cannot be defiled by anything that enters him from the outside? (19) For it doesn’t enter his heart, but his intestines, and then it goes out into the sewer.” (So Jesus was declaring all foods clean.)^k

(20) And Jesus continued, “A person is defiled by what comes out of him. (21) For evil thoughts stem from within the human heart—also sexual immorality, stealing, murder, (22) adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, lewd conduct, jealousy, blasphemy, arrogance, and foolishness. (23) All these evil things stem from within and defile a person.”

A Phoenician Woman’s Faith

(24) Then Jesus left that place and went to the region of Tyre,^l where He entered a house. Now even though He wanted to remain unrecognized, He couldn’t keep His presence secret. (25) For a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit promptly heard about Him and came and fell at His feet. (26) This woman was a Greek^m—a Phoenician of Syria by birth—and she kept asking Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.

(27) “First let the children eat all they want,” He told her. “It isn’t fair to take the children’s bread and toss it to the puppies.” (28) “But Sir,”^m she answered, “even the puppies under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” (29) “For such an answer, go on home,” He replied. “The demon has left your daughter.”

(30) So the woman went home and found the child lying on the bed, and the demon was gone.

Jesus Heals A Deaf Man

(31) Then Jesus left the region of Tyre and made His way through Sidon to the Lake of Galilee and the heart of the Decapolis.^o (32) Now some people brought Him a man who was deaf and who had difficulty speaking, and they begged Him to lay His hand on the man.

(33) So Jesus took him away from the crowd to be alone with him, and He put His fingers in the man’s ears. Then He spit and touched the man’s tongue. (34) And looking up to heaven, He sighed deeply and said “Ephphatha!”—which means, “Open up!” (35) At this, the man’s ears were opened, and his tied tongue was instantly set free, and he began speaking plainly. (36) Now Jesus commanded the people not to tell anyone about this. But the more He forbade them, the more they kept publicizing it, (37) for they were utterly astonished. “He has done everything well!” they exclaimed. “He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak!”

^aThe issue here is ritualistic, not sanitary. ^bThe best manuscripts read *washing their hands with a fist*. The meaning of this expression is uncertain. Other manuscripts read *washing their hands frequently*. ^c Some manuscripts read *without washing themselves*. ^dSome manuscripts read *cups, pitchers, kettles, and dining couches*.

^e The Greek term that has been translated *human/person* in chapter 7 is gender

inclusive. This applies to each use of *human* and *person* in the chapter. ^f Isa. 29:13 ^g Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16 (Septuagint) ^h Ex. 21:17; Lev. 20:9 ⁱ *Corban* is the transliteration of a Hebrew word that means *offering* or *gift*. ^j Some manuscripts insert (16) *If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.* ^k Or . . . *into the sewer. So all the foods he has eaten are purged from his body.* ^l Some manuscripts read *Tyre and Sidon.* ^m This probably indicates that the woman was a Greek-speaking Gentile, as the text clearly states that her nationality was Phoenician. ⁿ Some manuscripts read “*True enough Sir,*”. ^o The Decapolis was an autonomous association of Greek-speaking towns, originally ten in number.

CHAPTER 8

Jesus Feeds the Four Thousand

(1) About that time, another huge crowd gathered, and the people had nothing to eat. So Jesus called the disciples to Him and said, (2) “I feel sorry for these people. They have already been with Me three days, and they have nothing to eat. (3) Some of them have come a long distance, and if I send them home hungry, they will faint on the way.”

(4) “Where could anyone get enough bread in this lonely place to feed these people?” His disciples responded. (5) “How many loaves of bread do you have?” Jesus asked. “Seven,” they answered.

(6) At this, Jesus directed the people to sit down on the ground. Then He took the seven loaves, and after He had given thanks, He broke them and gave them to His disciples to distribute. So they served them to the people. (7) There were also a few small fish there, and Jesus gave thanks for the fish and told the disciples to distribute them as well. (8) So the people ate until they were content, and the disciples collected seven baskets full of broken pieces that were left over. (9) The number of men who were present was about four thousand.

Now after Jesus had dismissed them, (10) He quickly got into the boat with His disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha.^a

The Request for a Sign

(11) Some time later, the Pharisees started arguing with Jesus because they wanted to test Him. So they came to Him and asked for a miraculous sign from heaven. (12) But Jesus gave a deep sigh and said, “Why does this generation keep asking for a miraculous sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to it.” (13) And with that, He left them and returned by boat to the other side of the lake.

The Yeast of the Pharisees and Herod

(14) Now the disciples had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. (15) So when Jesus warned them, “Keep your eyes open, and watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod,” (16) they started discussing His statement with one another and concluded, “He said this because we have no bread.”^b

(17) But Jesus was aware of their discussion. “Why are you talking about having no bread?” He asked. “Don’t you understand or grasp My meaning even yet? Have your hearts been hardened? (18) You have eyes, so why can’t you see? And you have ears, so why can’t you hear? Don’t you remember? (19) When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?” “Twelve,” they replied. (20) “And what about the seven loaves for the four thousand—how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect then?” “Seven,” they answered.

(21) “Don’t you grasp My meaning even yet?” He asked them.

Jesus Heals a Blind Man at Bethsaida

(22) Now when they entered Bethsaida, some people brought a blind man to Jesus and begged Him to touch the man. (23) So Jesus took him by the hand and guided him out of the village. Then He spit in the man’s eyes and put His hands on him and asked if he could see anything. (24) “I see people,^c but they look like trees walking around,” he said as he looked up.

(25) So Jesus put His hands on the man’s eyes again, and as the man looked steadily ahead, his vision was restored, and he saw everything clearly. (26) Then Jesus sent him home and said, “Don’t go into the village.”^d

Peter’s Declaration of Faith

(27) Afterward, Jesus and His disciples set out for the villages around Caesarea Philippi. And on the way, He asked them, “Who do people say I am?” (28) They replied, “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and still others one of the prophets.”

(29) “But what about you?” He continued. “Who do you say I am?” “You are the Christ,”^e Peter answered. (30) Then Jesus gave them a stern warning not to tell this to anyone.

Jesus Predicts His Death

(31) Now He began to teach them that the Son of Man would have to endure great suffering and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and that He would be killed and after three days rise again.

(32) As He was speaking plainly about this, Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. (33) But Jesus turned around, and after He looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter. “Get out of My way, Satan!” He exclaimed. “You are not thinking God’s thoughts, but human thoughts.”

(34) Then Jesus called the people to Him along with His disciples and said, “Anyone who wants to come after Me must deny himself and take up his cross and continue to follow Me. (35) Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of Me and the good news will save it. (36) What will anyone gain by winning the whole world at the cost of his life? (37) Or what can he give in exchange for his life? (38) If anyone is ashamed of Me and My words in this unfaithful and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

^aThe location of Dalmanutha is uncertain. ^bThe disciples thought Jesus was telling them not to buy bread from the Pharisees or from Herod. They were still concerned about their need for food, even though Jesus had miraculously provided food for vast numbers of people on two recent occasions. In this, they demonstrated a lack of faith. ^cThe Greek term that has been translated *people, human, or anyone* in verses 24, 27, 33, and 36 is gender inclusive. ^dSome manuscripts read “*Don’t go into the village or tell anyone in the village.*” ^eThe Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*.

CHAPTER 9

(1) Then Jesus went on to say, “Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has arrived with power.”

The Transfiguration

(2) Now after six days, Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up a high mountain where they were alone. And in their presence, He was transfigured— (3) His clothing became glittering white, far whiter than anyone on earth could bleach it. (4) Then Elijah appeared before them, along with Moses, and these two men were talking with Jesus.

(5) At this, Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us put up three tents—one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” (6) (They were all so terrified that he had no idea what he was saying.)

(7) Then a cloud came up and covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is My Son, Whom I love. Continue listening to Him!” (8) And suddenly, as they looked around, there was no one there except Jesus.

The Question about Elijah

(9) Now on their way down the mountain, Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had been raised from the dead. (10) So they kept the matter to themselves, but they continued discussing what “rising from the dead” meant.

(11) Then they posed a question for Him: “Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?”^a (12) Jesus replied, “Yes, Elijah must come first and reform everything. But why is it written that the Son of Man will have to endure great suffering and be treated with contempt? (13) Nevertheless, I tell you that Elijah has come, and the people treated him as they pleased, just as it is written about him.”^b

Jesus Heals a Boy with a Demon

(14) When they returned to the other disciples, they saw a huge crowd surrounding them and a group of scribes arguing with them. (15) But all the people were overwhelmed with wonder the moment they saw Jesus, and they ran to greet Him. (16) Then He asked them, “Why are you arguing with My disciples?”

(17) At this, a man in the crowd spoke up. “Teacher,” he answered, “I brought my son to You because he has a spirit in him that prevents him from talking. (18) Whenever it seizes him, it dashes him to the ground, and he foams at the mouth. Then he grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive it out, but they couldn’t.”

(19) “What a faithless generation!” Jesus exclaimed. “How much longer will I be with you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring the boy to Me.”

(20) So they brought the boy to Him. And as soon as the spirit saw Jesus, it threw the boy into convulsions, and he fell to the ground and kept rolling around and foaming at the mouth. (21) “How long has he been like this?” Jesus asked the boy’s father. “Since childhood,” the man replied. (22) “It has often tried to kill him by throwing him into fire or into water. But if You can do anything, have pity on us and help us.”

(23) “If you can?” Jesus asked. “Everything is possible for the person who believes.” (24) At once, the boy’s father cried out,^c “I do believe! Help my unbelief!”

(25) When Jesus noticed that the crowd was rapidly closing in on them, He rebuked the evil spirit. “You deaf and dumb spirit,” He said, “I command you to come out of this boy and never enter him again.” (26) With that, the spirit screamed, and after it had thrown the boy into repeated convulsions, it came out. Now the boy looked so much like a corpse that many of the people said he was dead. (27) But as soon as Jesus took him by the hand and raised him to his feet, he stood up.

(28) Later, when Jesus entered a house, His disciples asked Him privately, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?” (29) He replied, “This kind of demon can only be

driven out by prayer.”^d

Jesus Predicts His Death a Second Time

(30) Then they left that region and began making their way through Galilee. But Jesus didn’t want anyone to know where they were, (31) because He was teaching His disciples. And He went on to tell them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of human beings.^e They will kill Him, but after three days, He will rise again.”

(32) Now the disciples never grasped the meaning of this statement, and they were afraid to ask Jesus about it.

True Greatness

(33) Then they came to Capernaum. And after Jesus had gone into the house, He asked His disciples, “What were you arguing about on the way?” (34) But they kept quiet, because they had been discussing which of them was the greatest. (35) So Jesus sat down and called the twelve over to Him. “If anyone wants to be first, he must be the last of all and the servant of all,” He told them.

(36) Then Jesus took a little child and had him stand among them. And as He held the child in His arms, He said to them, (37) “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in My name is welcoming Me. And whoever welcomes Me is welcoming not only Me, but the One Who sent Me.”

The Use of Jesus’ Name

(38) At this point, John said to Jesus, “Teacher, we saw someone driving out demons in Your name, and we tried to stop him because he didn’t belong to our group of followers.” (39) “Don’t stop him,” Jesus replied. “No one who performs a miracle in My name can speak evil of Me very quickly. (40) Whoever is not against us is for us. (41) And truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ^f will certainly receive his reward.

The Danger of Sin

(42) But if anyone leads one of these little ones who believe^g into sin, it would be better for him if he were thrown into the sea with a large millstone hung around his neck.

(43) If your hand leads you into sin, cut it off! It is better for you to enter life with an injury than to keep two hands and go off into hell—to the fire that cannot be put out.^h (45) If your foot leads you into sin, cut it off! It is better for you to enter life crippled than to keep two feet and be thrown into hell. (47) And if your eye leads you into sin, rip it out! It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to keep two eyes and be thrown into hell, (48) where the worms do not die and the fire is not put out.ⁱ (49) For everything will be purified with fire.^j

(50) Salt is good, but if salt loses its taste, how can you give it flavor again? So always have salt within yourselves, and continue to live in peace with one another.”

^aSee Mal. 4:5. On the basis of this scripture, it was commonly believed that the prophet Elijah would return to earth and prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah. ^b Jesus was referring to John the Baptist. See Matt. 17:13. ^c Some manuscripts read *cried out with tears*. ^d Some manuscripts read *by prayer and fasting*. ^e The Greek term that has been translated *human beings* is gender inclusive. ^f The Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. ^g Some manuscripts read *believe in Me*. ^h Some manuscripts insert verses 44 and 46, which are identical to verse 48. ⁱ Isa. 66:24 ^j Literally, *salted with fire*—some manuscripts add *and every sacrifice will be salted with salt*.

CHAPTER 10

Jesus' Teaching about Divorce

(1) Now Jesus left that place and went into the region of Judea and across the Jordan River.^a And once again, crowds of people accompanied Him, and He followed His usual practice and began teaching them.

(2) Then a group of Pharisees came to question Jesus. “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” they asked. (3) He replied, “What commandment did Moses give you?” (4) “Moses allowed a man to write his wife a notice of divorce and send her away,”^b they answered.

(5) “Moses wrote that commandment for you because your hearts were hard,” Jesus responded. (6) “But when God created the world at the beginning, He made them male and female.^c (7) ‘For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother, and cling to his wife,^d (8) and the two will become one flesh.’^e They are no longer two individuals, but one. (9) So human beings^f must stop separating what God has joined together.”

(10) When they were in the house again, the disciples started asking Jesus about this.^g (11) So He answered them, “Anyone who divorces his wife is committing adultery against her if he marries another woman. (12) And a woman who divorces her husband and marries another man is also committing adultery.”

Jesus and the Children

(13) Now people were bringing little children to Jesus, so He could touch them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. (14) When Jesus saw what was happening, He became angry. “Let the little children come to Me,” He told

them, “and stop hindering them. For the kingdom of God belongs to children like these. (15) Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it at all.”

(16) Then He took the children in His arms, and after He had laid His hands on them, He blessed them tenderly.

The Rich Young Man

(17) Now as Jesus was starting to leave, a man ran up to Him and fell on his knees before Him. “Good Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (18) Jesus answered him, “Why are you calling Me good? No one is good except God Himself. (19) You know the commandments: ‘You must not murder;’ ‘You must not commit adultery;’ ‘You must not steal;’ ‘You must not give false testimony;’^h ‘You must not practice fraud;’ⁱ and ‘Honor your father and mother.’”^j

(20) “Teacher,” the man exclaimed, “I have obeyed all these commandments ever since I was a boy!” (21) Then Jesus gazed at him with love and said, “You are still in need of one thing. Go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor—and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come back and follow Me.”

(22) At this, the man’s face became sad, and he went away with a broken heart. For he was very rich.

The Danger of Wealth

(23) Afterward, Jesus looked around at His disciples and said to them, “How hard it is for wealthy people to enter the kingdom of God!” (24) And they were amazed at His words. But Jesus continued, “Children, how hard it is^k to enter the kingdom of God! (25) It is easier for a camel to squeeze through the eye of a sewing needle than for a rich person to enter God’s kingdom.”

(26) With that, the disciples were completely dumfounded. “So who can be saved?” they asked Him.^l (27) Then Jesus gazed intently at them and said, “With human beings, salvation is impossible, but that isn’t the case with God. Everything is possible with God.”

The Disciples’ Reward

(28) Then Peter spoke up. “Look,” he said, “we left everything to follow You.” (29) Jesus replied, “Truly I tell you, anyone who left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for Me and for the good news (30) will receive 100 times as much in this present age—homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and fields, along with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life. (31) But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.”

Jesus Predicts His Death a Third Time

(32) Now they were on the road up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way. And the disciples were amazed, while the people who followed were afraid.^m

Once again, He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him. (33) “We are going up to Jerusalem,” He said, “and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes. They will condemn Him to death and turn Him over to the Gentiles, (34) who will mock Him, spit on Him, flog Him, and kill Him. But after three days, He will rise again.”

A Request from James and John

(35) Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus and said, “Teacher, we are requesting a favor, and we would like You to do it for us.” (36) “What do you want Me to do for you?” He asked. (37) They replied, “Let one of us sit on Your right and the other on Your left in Your glory.” (38) “You don’t realize what you are requesting,” Jesus told them. “Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink or endure the baptism that I am going to endure?” (39) “We can!” they answered.

“You will drink the cup that I am going to drink and endure the baptism that I am going to endure,” Jesus responded. (40) “But permission to sit on My right or My left is not Mine to give. These positions are already prepared for the people who have been chosen for them.”

A Call to Servant Leadership

(41) When the other ten heard about this, they became angry with James and John. (42) So Jesus called them together and said to them, “You are aware that among the Gentiles, those who are recognized as rulers dominate their people, and their high officials make them feel their authority. (43) But it must not be that way with you! Instead, whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, (44) and whoever wants to be first among you must be a slave to everyone. (45) For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”

Jesus Heals a Blind Man

(46) Then Jesus and His disciples arrived in Jericho. And as they were leaving the city with a large crowd, a blind beggar named Bartimaeusⁿ (the son of Timaeus) was sitting by the roadside. (47) When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David!^o Have mercy on me!” (48) At this, many of the people began rebuking him and telling him to be quiet. But he shouted all the more, “Son of David! Have mercy on me!”

(49) Then Jesus stopped and said, “Call him!” So the people called out to the blind man, “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you!” (50) With that, the blind

man threw aside his outer robe, jumped up, and came to Jesus.

(51) “What do you want Me to do for you?” Jesus asked him. “Rabbi, I want to be able to see again,” the blind man replied. (52) “Go on home,” Jesus told him. “Your faith has healed you.” And immediately, he regained his sight and started following Jesus down the road.

^a Some manuscripts read *the region of Judea beyond the Jordan River*. ^b Deut. 24:1-3 ^cGen. 1:27; 5:2 ^d Some manuscripts omit *and cling to His wife*. ^e Gen. 2:24 ^f The Greek term that has been translated *human beings* is gender inclusive—see also verse 27. ^g Or *When they were in the house, the disciples started asking Jesus about this again*. ^hEx. 20:13-16; Deut. 5:17-20 ⁱ This is probably a further allusion to the eighth or ninth commandment. ^j Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16 ^k Some manuscripts read *how hard it is for those who trust in wealth*. ^l Some manuscripts read *they asked each other*. ^m Jesus’ followers were well aware that plots were being laid in Jerusalem to take His life. ⁿ In Aramaic, *Bartimaeus* means *the son of Timaeus*. ^o Or *Descendant of David—the son of David* is a Messianic title that refers to Jesus—see also verse 48.

CHAPTER 11

Palm Sunday—Jesus Enters Jerusalem in Triumph

(1) Now they were approaching Jerusalem, and when they came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of His disciples (2) with the following instructions: “Go into the village ahead of you, and as soon as you enter it, you will find a colt there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie him and bring him to Me. (3) And if anyone asks you why you are doing this, you are to say, ‘His Lord needs him, and He will send him back here again right away.’”

(4) So the disciples went and found the colt outside in the street, tied by a doorway. And as they were untying him, (5) some of the people who were standing there started asking them, “What are you doing, untying that colt?” (6) At this, the disciples told them what Jesus had said, and the people let them go.

(7) Then they brought the colt to Jesus, and after they had thrown their robes over the colt’s back, Jesus sat on him. (8) Meanwhile, many people spread out their robes on the road, while others scattered brush they had cut from the fields. (9) Then the people who were walking ahead of Jesus and those who were following Him began to shout:

“Hosanna!^a
 How blessed is the One
 Who is coming in the name of the Lord!
 (10) How blessed is the coming kingdom

of our ancestor^b David!
Hosanna in the highest!”^c

(11) Afterward, Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple, where He looked around at everything. But since it was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Jesus Curses the Fig Tree

(12) Now in the morning, Jesus was hungry as they were leaving Bethany. (13) And He noticed a fig tree in the distance that was covered with foliage, so He went to find out if it had any fruit. But when He came to it, He found nothing on it except leaves, because it was not the right season for figs. (14) Then He said to the tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again!” And His disciples heard what He said.

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

(15) When they arrived in Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple and started driving out the people who were buying and selling there.^d He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who sold doves, (16) and He refused to let anyone carry merchandise through the temple.

(17) While He was teaching, He asked the people, “Isn’t it written, ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations?’”^e But you have made it a ‘den of robbers.’”^f (18) Now the chief priests and the scribes heard what He was saying and began looking for a way to get rid of Him. For they feared Him because the entire crowd was amazed at His teaching. (19) And when evening came, He^g left the city.

The Withered Fig Tree

(20) Early the next morning, as they passed the fig tree, they noticed that it had withered from its roots. (21) “Look Rabbi!” Peter exclaimed as he recalled what had happened. “The fig tree You cursed has withered!”

(22) “Have faith in God!” Jesus replied. (23) “Truly I tell you,^h if anyone says to this mountain, ‘May you be plucked up and thrown into the sea’—if he has no doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will happen—it will be done for him! (24) This is why I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have already received it,ⁱ and it will be yours. (25) And when you stand up to pray, forgive anyone you hold a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins.”^j

Jesus’ Authority Questioned

(27) Then they arrived in Jerusalem again, and as Jesus was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders approached Him (28) and asked, “By

what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You authority to do them?” (29) “I will also ask you a question,” Jesus responded. “Give Me your answer, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. (30) What about John’s baptism? Was it from heaven or from human beings?^k Give Me your answer!”

(31) So they started discussing this question among themselves—“If we say, ‘from heaven,’ He will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’ (32) But dare we say, ‘from human beings?’” (They were afraid of the people, for everyone was convinced that John was a genuine prophet.)

(33) Finally, they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.” And He replied, “In that case, I will not tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”

^a*Hosanna* is a transliteration from the Aramaic. This expression literally means *Please save!* and can be understood as a prayer that salvation will come to Israel through Jesus. However, *Hosanna* also came to function as an exclamation of praise to God. It is likely that both of these meanings are present here. ^b Or *father* ^c Ps. 118:25-26 ^d Sacrificial animals were sold in the outer court of the temple. However, these animals could only be purchased with the special temple currency. Consequently, people had to exchange their secular currency for this special money in order to purchase these animals. This practice provided the moneychangers with an opportunity to enrich themselves by demanding an exorbitant exchange rate. ^e Isa. 56:7 ^f Jer. 7:11 ^g Some manuscripts read *they*. ^h Some manuscripts read *Jesus replied, “If you have faith in God, truly I tell you, . . .”* ⁱ Some manuscripts read *believe that you are receiving it, . . .* Other manuscripts read *believe that you will receive it, . . .* ^j Some manuscripts insert (26) *But if you don’t forgive, your Father in heaven will not forgive your sins.* ^k The Greek term that has been translated *human beings* in verses 30 and 32 is gender inclusive.

CHAPTER 12

The Parable of the Wicked Farmers

(1) Now Jesus began to speak to them in parables: “There was a man who planted a vineyard. He put a fence around it, dug a pit for the winepress, and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to a group of farmers and went on a journey.

(2) But when the season for grapes came, he sent a servant to the farmers to collect a portion of the vineyard’s fruit. (3) At this, the farmers grabbed the servant, and after they had beaten him, they sent him away empty-handed. (4) So the man tried again and sent them another servant, but they hit that servant over the head and treated him shamefully. (5) Then the man sent still another servant,

and they killed him. And it was the same with many others; the farmers beat some and killed the rest.

(6) Finally, the only person the man had left was a son whom he loved. So last of all, he sent his son to the farmers. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said. (7) But the farmers said to one another, ‘This is the future owner. Come on, let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!’ (8) And with that, they grabbed him, killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.

(9) Now what will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and eradicate those farmers, and give the vineyard to others. (10) Haven’t you read this scripture:

‘The Stone the builders rejected
turned out to be the main Cornerstone.

(11) This was the Lord’s doing,
and it is remarkable in our eyes?’”^a

(12) Then the leaders started looking for a way to arrest Jesus, because they realized He had spoken this parable against them. But since they were afraid of the people, they left Him and went away.

A Question about Paying Taxes

(13) Later, they sent some Pharisees and Herodians^b to try to trap Jesus in His words. (14) So they came to Him and said, “Teacher, we know You are sincere. You don’t worry about anyone’s status, since You pay no attention to outward appearances. Instead, You are teaching us the way of God in honesty. Now is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay them or shouldn’t we?”

(15) But Jesus was aware of their hypocrisy, and He said to them, “Why are you trying to trap Me? Bring Me a denarius,^c so I can look at it.” (16) And they brought Him the coin. “Whose picture and title are these?” He asked. “Caesar’s,” they replied. (17) “Well then,” Jesus said, “pay Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and God the things that are God’s.” And they were completely stunned by His answer.

A Question about the Resurrection

(18) Then a group of Sadducees (who say there is no resurrection) also came to Jesus with a question. (19) “Teacher,” they said, “Moses wrote that if a man’s brother dies and leaves a wife with no children, the man should marry the widow and produce descendants^d for his brother.^e (20) Well there were once seven brothers. The first one married and died without leaving any descendants. (21) Then the second brother married the widow, but he also died without descendants. And the same thing happened to the third brother. (22) In fact, none of the seven had any descendants. Finally, the woman died as well. (23) Now at the resurrection,^f whose wife will she be, since all seven were married to her?”

(24) Jesus answered them, “You don’t understand the scriptures or the power of God! Isn’t this the reason you have gone astray? (25) People won’t marry when they rise from the dead. They will be like the angels in heaven.

(26) But as for the dead rising—have you never read the story of the burning bush in the book of Moses? God spoke to him and said, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’^g (27) God isn’t the God of the dead, but of the living. How far you have gone astray!”

A Question about the Law

(28) Now when one of the scribes came along, he heard the debate and noticed that Jesus had given the Sadducees a good answer. So the scribe asked Him, “Which commandment is the most important one of all?” (29) Jesus answered, “This is the most important one: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, (30) and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’^h (31) And this is the second one: ‘You must love your neighbor as yourself.’ⁱ No other commandment is greater than these.”

(32) “Well said, Teacher!” the scribe replied. “You spoke the truth when You said that God is one and that there is no other god besides Him. (33) And to love Him with all your heart, with all your understanding, and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself means more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

(34) Now Jesus noticed that the scribe had answered wisely. So He said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And no one dared to ask Him any more questions.

A Question about the Christ

(35) While Jesus was teaching in the temple, He went on to ask, “How can the scribes claim that the Christ^j is David’s Descendant?^k (36) It was David himself who declared by the Holy Spirit:

‘The Lord said to my Lord,
“Sit at My right hand,
until I put Your enemies
under Your feet.”’^l

(37) David himself called Him Lord. So how can He be David’s Descendant?[?] (Meanwhile, the huge crowd of people continued listening to Jesus with delight.)

Jesus Denounces the Scribes

(38) Now as He was teaching, Jesus added, “Watch out for the scribes. They like to parade around in long, flowing robes, and to be greeted in the marketplaces,

(39) and to have the most prominent seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at formal dinners. (40) They devour the homes of widows and say long prayers to cover it up. So they will be punished more severely.”

The Widow's Coins

(41) Later, Jesus was sitting opposite the contribution box for the temple treasury, watching how the people were dropping their money into it. And many rich people were putting in large amounts. (42) Then a poor widow came along and dropped in two little copper coins^m that together were worth a penny.ⁿ

(43) At this, Jesus called His disciples together and said to them, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow put more into the treasury than all the others. (44) For everyone else who contributed had plenty, but she in her need put in all she had to live on.”

^aPs. 118:22-23 (Septuagint) ^bThe Herodians were a Jewish political party that supported Herod Antipas and the Romans. If Jesus had opposed the payment of taxes to Caesar, the Herodians would have reported Him to Rome for treason. ^cThe denarius was a silver coin that was minted by the Romans. In the time of Christ, it was the usual daily wage for the average worker. ^dLiterally, *seed*—see also verses 20-22. ^eDeut. 25:5-6 ^fSome manuscripts read *Now at the resurrection, when the dead rise.* ^gEx. 3:6—the Sadducees accepted only the writings of Moses as inspired scripture. So Jesus met them on their own ground by pointing out that even Moses alluded to the resurrection. ^hDeut. 6:5 ⁱLev. 19:18 (Septuagint) ^jThe Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. ^kOr *Son*—see also verse 37. ^lPs. 110:1 ^mLiterally, *two leptons*—in the time of Jesus, the lepton was the smallest and least valuable coin in use. ⁿLiterally, *a quadrans*—the quadrans was worth approximately one cent.

CHAPTER 13

Jesus Predicts the Temple's Destruction

(1) While Jesus was leaving the temple, one of His disciples exclaimed, “Teacher! Look at the huge stones and the awesome buildings!” (2) “Do you see these great buildings?” Jesus asked. “Not one stone here will be left on another; they will all be torn down.”^a

Signs of the End

(3) Now as Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives facing the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew started questioning Him in private. (4) “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen? And what will be the sign that all these things are

about to be fulfilled?” (5) So Jesus began to speak to them: “See to it that no one deceives you. (6) Many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am He!’^b and they will deceive many people. (7) And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be afraid. These things are bound to happen, but the end is still to come. (8) Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes and famines^c in one place after another. But these are only the first birth pains of the new age.

(9) You must always be on your guard! People will hand you over to local councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. And because of Me, you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. (10) For the good news must first be proclaimed to all nations. (11) But when they lead you off to trial, don’t worry beforehand about what to say. Just speak the words you are given at that time. It won’t be you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.

(12) A brother will hand over his brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. (13) Everyone will hate you because of Me, but whoever holds out to the end will be saved.

The Abomination That Brings Desolation

(14) So when you see the abomination that brings desolation standing where it should not be^d— the reader should be sure to understand this one — then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. (15) If anyone is on a roof, he must not go down into his house to get anything out, (16) and if anyone is in a field, he must not turn back to get his clothing.

(17) How awful it will be for pregnant women and nursing mothers in those days! (18) And continue to pray that this will not happen in winter. (19) For those days will bring tribulation unlike anything that has taken place from the time God created the world until now, and there will never be anything like it again. (20) In fact, if the Lord did not shorten the duration of those days, no one would be saved. But for the sake of God’s chosen ones, their duration will be shortened.

(21) At that time, if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’^e or ‘There He is!’ do not believe it. (22) For false christs and false prophets will appear, and they will produce signs and wonders to deceive God’s chosen ones, if that were possible. (23) So be on your guard. I have already warned you about everything.

The Second Coming of Christ

(24) Now in the days following that time of tribulation,

‘the sun will be darkened,
the moon will lose its radiance,
(25) the stars will fall from the sky,
and the cosmic powers will be shaken.’^f

(26) Then the people of the world will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. (27) And He will send out the angels and gather His chosen ones from the four winds—from the very ends of earth and sky.

The Timing of Christ's Coming

(28) Now remember this illustration from the fig tree. When its twigs become tender and its leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is near. (29) And in the same way, when you see these signs taking place, you can know that the end is near. It is right at the door! (30) Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these signs have taken place. (31) The earth and the sky will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

(32) Yet no one knows when that day or hour will come—neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son Himself. Only the Father knows. (33) So always be on your guard, and always be alert!^g For you don't know when the appointed time will come. (34) It will be like a man who is traveling abroad. When he left home, he put his servants in charge of everything, assigned work to each of them, and commanded the doorkeeper to stay awake.

(35) So stay awake, because you don't know when the Master of the house is coming. It could be in the evening, at midnight, when the rooster crows, or early in the morning. (36) Make sure He doesn't come suddenly and find you sleeping. (37) And what I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Stay awake!'"

^aJesus' prophecy was fulfilled at the conclusion of the Jewish-Roman War in A.D. 70, when the Roman army burned the temple and the city of Jerusalem.

^b Literally, 'I am!' ^c Some manuscripts read *earthquakes, famines, and troubles*. ^d See Dan. 8:13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11. ^e The Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*—see also verse 22. ^f Isa. 13:10; 34:4; Joel 2:10 ^g Some manuscripts read *and always be alert and pray!*

CHAPTER 14

The Plot to Murder Jesus

(1) It was now two days before the Passover and Unleavened Bread,^a and the chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by treachery and kill Him. (2) "But it must not happen during the festival," they kept insisting, "or there may be rioting among the people."

A Woman Anoints Jesus with Perfume

(3) While Jesus was in Bethany, reclining^b at the dinner table in the home of Simon, who once had leprosy,^c a woman came in with an alabaster bottle of very costly perfume that was pure nard.^d Then she broke^e the bottle and poured the perfume over Jesus' head. (4) But some of the people there became angry and said to one another, "Why such a waste of perfume? (5) This perfume could have been sold for more than 300 denarii^f and the money given to the poor." And they started railing against her.

(6) "Leave her alone!" Jesus exclaimed. "Why are you upsetting her? She has done a beautiful thing for Me. (7) You will always have the poor with you, and you can do kind things for them whenever you want. But you won't always have Me. (8) She did what she could. She anointed My body ahead of time to prepare Me for burial. (9) And truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed throughout the world, what this woman has done will be told in memory of her."

Judas Becomes an Enemy of Jesus

(10) Then Judas, the man from Kerioth,^g who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests with a plan to hand Jesus over to them. (11) And when they heard his offer, they were delighted and promised to pay him a sum of money. So Judas began to watch for a good opportunity to betray Jesus.

The Passover

(12) Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lambs, Jesus' disciples asked Him, "Where do You want us to go to prepare the Passover Seder for You?" (13) At this, He sent two of His disciples with the following instructions: "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jug of water will meet you. Follow him (14) into the house he enters, and give this message to the homeowner: 'The Teacher asks, "Where is My guest room, where I can eat the Passover with My disciples?'" (15) He will show you a large upper room that has already been furnished and equipped. Get things ready for us there." (16) So the disciples left, and after they had entered the city, they found everything just as Jesus had told them, and they prepared the Seder. (17) When evening came, Jesus arrived with the twelve. (18) And while they were reclining at dinner, He said to them, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray Me—one of you who are eating with Me."

(19) At this, they began to grieve, and they started asking Him one by one, "I'm not the person, am I?" (20) "It is one of the twelve," Jesus replied, "someone who is dipping his bread into the bowl with Me. (21) The Son of Man is going to His fate, just as it is written about Him. But woe to the man who betrays Him! It would have been better for that man if he had never been born!"

The Lord's Supper

(22) While they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it. And after He had broken it, He gave it to the disciples and said, "Take it. This is My body."

(23) Then He took a cup, and after He had given thanks, He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. (24) "This is My blood of the covenant,"^h He said. "It is being poured out on behalf of many people."

(25) Truly I tell you, I will never drink the product of the vine again, until the day I drink new wine in the kingdom of God."

(26) And after they sang a hymn,ⁱ they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial

(27) Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will stumble in your faith. For it is written:

'I will strike the Shepherd,
and the sheep will be scattered.'^j

(28) But after I have been raised to life, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."

(29) At this, Peter answered Him, "Even if all the others stumble in their faith, I certainly won't!" (30) "Really?" Jesus replied. "Truly I tell you, on this very night, before the rooster crows twice,^k you will deny Me three times." (31) But Peter was insistent. "Even if I have to die with You, I will never deny You!" he declared. And all the others kept saying the same thing.

Jesus Prays in Gethsemane

(32) Now when they came to a plot of land called Gethsemane, Jesus said to His disciples, "Sit down here while I pray." (33) Then He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to feel horror, as He shrank back with a strange agitation.

(34) "My entire being is overwhelmed with grief, even to the point of death," He told them. "So wait here and stay awake."

(35) And going on a little farther, He fell to the ground and began to pray that if possible, His time of suffering would pass away from Him. (36) "Abba,^l Father," He said, "everything is possible for You. Take this cup of suffering away from Me. Yet not My will, but Yours be done."

(37) Then He returned to the disciples and found them sleeping. And He said to Peter, "Simon, are you sleeping? Couldn't you stay awake for one hour? (38) Now stay awake, and keep praying that you won't enter into temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

(39) After this, Jesus went away once more and prayed the same words as before. (40) Then He came back again and found them sleeping. For their eyes were heavy, and they had no idea how to answer Him.

(41) Finally, He came back a third time and said to them, “You can continue sleeping and resting later on.^m The deal is settled,ⁿ and the time has arrived! Look, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. (42) Get up! Let’s be going! Here comes My betrayer!”

Jesus Is Arrested

(43) At that moment, while Jesus was still speaking, Judas, who was one of the twelve, arrived with a crowd. The men were armed with swords and clubs, and they had been sent by the chief priests, scribes, and elders.

(44) Now the betrayer had given them a pre-arranged signal. “The Person I kiss is your Man,” he told them. “Arrest Him and lead Him away under guard.” (45) And with that, he quickly stepped up to Jesus. “Rabbi!” he exclaimed, and he kissed Him tenderly. (46) Then the men from the crowd manhandled Jesus and arrested Him. (47) At this point, one of the bystanders drew his sword and struck the high priest’s servant, cutting off his ear.

(48) But Jesus said to them, “Did you come out with swords and clubs to capture Me because you took Me for a robber? (49) Day after day, I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest Me. But this is happening so that the scriptures can be fulfilled.”

(50) Then everyone deserted Him and fled.

The Young Man Who Ran Away Naked^p

(51) Now there was a young man among the followers of Jesus who was wearing only a linen cloth. And when they grabbed him, (52) he left the linen cloth behind and ran away naked.

The Trial Before the High Priest

(53) Then the men led Jesus away to the high priest, and all the chief priests, elders, and scribes assembled together there. (54) Meanwhile, Peter followed Jesus at a distance until he found himself inside the high priest’s courtyard. Then he sat down with the guards and warmed himself by the fire.

(55) Now the chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin^p were trying to find evidence against Jesus that would justify a death sentence. But they failed to find any, (56) for even though many people kept giving false testimony against Him, their stories did not agree. (57) Finally, some men stood up and submitted this false testimony against Him: (58) “We heard Him say, ‘I will destroy this sanctuary that was made by human hands, and in three days, I will build another one that won’t be made by

human hands.”^a (59) Yet even then, their stories did not agree.

(60) Then the high priest stood up in the middle of the assembly and questioned Jesus. “Don’t You have an answer?” he asked. “What about the accusation these men are bringing against You?” (61) But Jesus remained silent and gave no response.

So the high priest questioned Him again. “Are You the Christ,^r the Son of the Blessed One?” he asked. (62) “I am!” Jesus replied. “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming with the clouds of the sky!”

(63) At this, the high priest tore his clothing.^s “Why do we need any more witnesses?” he asked. (64) “You have heard the blasphemy! What is your verdict?” And they all pronounced Him guilty and deserving of death. (65) Then some of them began to spit on Him, and they blindfolded Him and hit Him with their fists. “Prophecy!” they said. And even the guards started slapping Him.

Peter Denies Jesus

(66) While Peter was down in the courtyard, one of the high priest’s servant girls came along. (67) And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked directly at him and commented, “You were also with that Nazarene, Jesus.” (68) But he denied it. “I don’t know the Man!” he exclaimed. “In fact, I don’t even understand what you’re talking about!” And with that, he went out to the entrance.^t

(69) Now the servant girl saw him there, and once again, she started telling the bystanders, “This fellow is one of them!” (70) But Peter denied it again.

A little later, the same bystanders started accusing Peter once more. “You are obviously one of them!” they insisted. “In fact, you’re a Galilean!” (71) Then he began to curse and swear. “I don’t know this Man you’re talking about!” he yelled.

(72) Just then, a rooster crowed for the second time,^u and Peter remembered how Jesus had told him, “Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.” And he broke down and cried.

^aOr *Unfermentation*—see also verse 12. ^b In the time of Jesus, people who were attending a feast commonly reclined on couches as they ate. See also verse 18.

^c The term *leprosy* was probably used for several different skin diseases. ^d The meaning of the Greek term that has been translated *pure* is uncertain. *Nard* is an aromatic oil that is derived from the root of a plant native to India. ^e The neck of this type of bottle had to be broken to release its contents. ^f The denarius was a silver coin that was minted by the Romans. Since the average worker in the time of Christ earned 300 denarii per year, this perfume was worth more than a year’s wages. ^g *Kerioth* was a town in southern Judea. ^h Some manuscripts read *new covenant*.^h For the significance of the new covenant, see Jer. 31:31-34. ⁱ Probably the *Hallel* (Ps. 113-118) ^j Zech. 13:7 ^k Some manuscripts omit *twice*. ^l *Abba* is

an extremely intimate Aramaic term for one's father. *Dad* is probably its closest English equivalent. ^m Or "*Are you still sleeping and resting?*" ⁿ The meaning of the Greek is uncertain. ^o Many expositors have suggested that the young man who ran away naked was John Mark, who later wrote this Gospel. However, this is not certain. ^p The Great Sanhedrin (or Great Council) functioned as the highest Jewish court. ^q See John 2:18-22. But notice how the wording was altered by the false witnesses. ^r The Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. ^s It was a common practice for pious Jews to tear their clothing when they heard someone blaspheme the name of God. However, the high priest was forbidden to do this. See Lev. 21:10. ^t Some manuscripts add *and a rooster crowed*. ^u In this verse, some manuscripts omit *for the second time and twice*.

CHAPTER 15

The Trial before Pilate

(1) When it was early morning, the chief priests met with the elders, the scribes, and the whole Sanhedrin,^a and they reached a decision. And after they had tied Jesus up, they led Him off and handed Him over to Pilate.

(2) Then Pilate asked Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" "Yes, I am," Jesus answered, "although the words are yours." (3) Meanwhile, the chief priests were accusing Him of many things, (4) so Pilate questioned Him again. "Aren't You going to answer?" he asked. "Look at how many things they are accusing You of." (5) However, to Pilate's great surprise, Jesus made no further reply.

(6) Now during the festival, it was Pilate's custom to release a particular prisoner the people were requesting. (7) And at that time, a man named Barabbas was in custody along with the rebels who had committed murder in the uprising.^b (8) So when the crowd came up and started asking Pilate to follow his usual custom, (9) he responded, "Do you want me to release the King of the Jews for you?" (10) (He asked this question because he knew the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him out of jealousy.)

Pilate Sentences Jesus to Death

(11) But the chief priests incited the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas for them instead. (12) "Then what should I do with the Man you call the King of the Jews?" Pilate asked. (13) "Crucify Him!" they screamed. (14) "But why? What has He done wrong?" Pilate continued. At this, they started screaming at the top of their voices, "Crucify Him!"

(15) So because he wanted to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them. But he had Jesus flogged with a leaded whip and handed Him over to be

crucified.

Jesus Is Crowned with Thorns

(16) Now the soldiers led Jesus into the governor's palace (known as the Praetorium), and they called the whole battalion together. (17) Then they put a purple robe on Him, and after they had braided a crown of thorns, they dangled it around His head. (18) And they began saluting Him with the words, "Hail, King of the Jews!" (19) Again and again, they beat Him over the head with a staff, spit on Him, and knelt down to worship Him.

The Crucifixion

(20) When they had finished their mockery, they took the purple robe off Him, dressed Him in His own clothes, and led Him out to crucify Him. (21) But they forced a passerby who was coming in from the fields to carry Jesus' cross. It was Simon of Cyrene,^c the father of Alexander and Rufus.^d

(22) Finally, the soldiers brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha^e (which means The Place of a Skull). (23) And even though they tried to give Him wine that had been drugged with myrrh,^f He refused to take it. (24) So they crucified Him. And they gambled for His clothes by casting lots^g to decide what each of them would get. (25) It was nine o'clock in the morning^h when He was crucified.

(26) Now there was a written notice that listed the charge against Him. It read:

"THE KING OF THE JEWS."

The Dying Jesus Is Insulted

(27) There were also two robbers who were crucified with Jesus—one on His right and the other on His left.ⁱ (29) And the people who were passing by kept insulting Him. They shook their heads and said, "Aha! So You're the One Who's going to destroy the sanctuary and rebuild it in three days! (30) Then save Yourself and come down from the cross!"

(31) And the chief priests and the scribes kept joking with one another in the same way. "He saved others," they said, "but He can't save Himself. (32) Let the Christ,^k the King of Israel, come down from the cross, so we can see it and believe!"

And even the men who were crucified with Him kept insulting Him.

The Death of Jesus

(33) When it was noon,^l darkness came over the entire land^m until three o'clock.ⁿ (34) Then at three o'clock, Jesus cried out a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi,

lema sabachthani?”—which means, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”^o

(35) At this, some of the people who were standing there spoke up. “Listen!” they said. “He’s calling for Elijah!”^p (36) Then one of them ran and soaked a sponge in wine vinegar and held it up on the end of a stick for Jesus to drink.^q “Leave Him alone!” this man exclaimed. “Let’s see if Elijah is coming to take Him down!” (37) But Jesus gave a great cry and breathed His last, (38) and the curtain in the sanctuary was ripped in two from top to bottom.

(39) Now when the centurion^r who was standing in front of the cross^s saw how Jesus died, he commented, “This Man was the Son of God!” (40) There were also some women who were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary (the mother of the younger James and of Joseph^t), and Salome. (41) These women had been following Jesus and caring for His needs while He was in Galilee. And many other women who had come up to Jerusalem with Him were there as well.

Jesus Is Buried

(42) By this time, evening was drawing near, and since it was Preparation Day^u (that is, the day before the Sabbath), (43) Joseph of Arimathea^v (a prominent member of the Sanhedrin, who was waiting for the kingdom of God) gathered his courage and went to Pilate to ask for Jesus’ body.

(44) Now Pilate was amazed to hear that Jesus had already died. So he summoned the centurion and asked him if Jesus had been dead very long. (45) And as soon as the centurion confirmed His death, Pilate assigned the body to Joseph. (46) At this, Joseph bought a linen cloth and took the body down from the cross. Then he wrapped it in the linen and laid it in a tomb that had been carved out of solid rock. And he rolled a stone against the tomb’s entrance.

(47) All the while, Mary Magdalene and Mary (the mother of Joseph^w) kept gazing at the place where Jesus had been laid.

^aThe Great Sanhedrin (or Great Council) functioned as the highest Jewish court. See also verse 43. ^b At the present time, nothing is known of this uprising, although it was well-known to Mark. ^c *Cyrene* was a Libyan city in north Africa. ^d It seems that Alexander and Rufus were prominent members of the early church. The Rufus who was greeted by Paul in Rom. 16:13 may have been Simon’s son. ^e *Golgotha* is an Aramaic term that means *skull*. ^f *Myrrh* has narcotic properties and was used to relieve pain. ^g *Lots* were small pebbles or sticks that were used in games of chance. ^h Literally, *the third hour* ⁱ Some manuscripts insert (28) *So the scripture was fulfilled that says, “He was numbered with the outlaws.”* ^j Or *kept blaspheming* ^k The Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. ^l Literally, *the sixth hour*. ^m Or *earth* ⁿ Literally, *the ninth hour*—see also verse 34. ^o Jesus was quoting Ps. 22:1 in Aramaic. ^p The people misunderstood Jesus’ words in verse 34 and thought He was calling Elijah. ^q Roman soldiers often drank wine vinegar mixed with water, which was considered a refreshing beverage. ^r A centurion was a commander of approximately 100 Roman soldiers. See also verses 44-45. ^s Literally, *in front of Him* ^t Literally, *Joses*—*Joses* is a variant of Joseph. See also verse 47. ^u *Preparation Day* is the Jewish term for

Friday, the day before the Sabbath. ^v *Arimathea* is the Greek transliteration of *Ramah*. However, there were several towns in Palestine named *Ramah*, and it is uncertain which one was intended. ^w *Joseph* was the brother of the younger James. See verse 40.

CHAPTER 16

Jesus Rises from the Dead

(1) When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary (the mother of James^a), and Salome brought spices so they could go and anoint Jesus' body. (2) And very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they made their way to the tomb. (3) But they kept asking one another, "Who will roll the stone away from the tomb's entrance?" (4) Then they looked up and noticed that the stone had already been rolled away, even though it was very large.

(5) Now as they entered the tomb, they saw a young man in a white robe, sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. (6) "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, Who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here! Come and see the place where they laid Him. (7) Then go and tell His disciples, including Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee, where you will see Him, just as He told you.'"

(8) At this, the women went outside and fled from the tomb, for they were trembling and bewildered.

And they said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.^b

^aJames was the brother of Joseph. See Mark 15:40. ^b Verses 9-20 have been produced in endnote form, as they are omitted by the two best Greek manuscripts (Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus). Both the textual evidence and the literary style of these verses indicate that they were not part of the original Gospel of Mark. (9) After Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, He made His first appearance to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had driven seven demons. (10) Then she went and reported the news to His followers, who were grieving and crying. (11) But when they heard her say that Jesus was alive and that she had seen Him, they refused to believe it. (12) Later, Jesus appeared in a different form to two of His followers as they were walking in the country. (13) So they also went back and shared the news with the others, but no one believed them either. (14) Finally, Jesus appeared to the eleven as they were reclining at the table, and He rebuked them for their lack of faith and their hard hearts, because they had not believed the people who had seen Him after His resurrection. (15) Then He said to them, "You must go into every part of the world and proclaim the good news to all creation. (16) Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. (17) And these are the miraculous signs that will accompany the believers: In My name, they will drive out demons; they will speak in new languages; (18) they will pick up snakes, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will never harm them. They will also lay their hands on sick people, and the sick will recover." (19) Now after the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was taken up into heaven, and He sat down at the right hand of

God. (20) Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord continued working with them and kept confirming His message by the miraculous signs that accompanied it. Some manuscripts provide another spurious ending for the Gospel of Mark at the end of verse eight: But they gave Peter's companions a brief account of all the instructions they had received. And afterward, Jesus Himself sent out the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation from east to west through His disciples. Amen.

STUDY GUIDE

- (1) Mark attributes many miraculous healings to Jesus. What is your definition of a miracle? How do miracles differ from magic? Could miracles have a logical explanation that we don't currently understand? Are miracles credible in an age of science?
- (2) If Jesus was sinless, why did He request baptism? (*Mark 1:4-11; 1 Pet. 2:22*)
- (3) What did Jesus mean when He said that "the kingdom of God is near?" Why is this good news? (*Mark 1:14-15*)
- (4) What was Jesus' attitude toward the Sabbath? How did it differ from the Pharisees' attitude toward the Sabbath? (*Mark 2:23-3:1-6*)
- (5) Why do you think Jesus chose twelve apostles to lead His church? Does the Christian Church have apostles today? (*Mark 3:13-19*)
- (6) What does Jesus' ability to calm a storm tell us about His identity? (*Mark 4:35-41*)
- (7) Why do you think Jesus gave the demons permission to enter the pigs? (*Mark 5:1-13*)
- (8) Why was Jesus rejected in Nazareth? (*Mark 6:1-6*)
- (9) What did Jesus mean when He told His disciples that some of them would not experience death until they had seen that the kingdom of God had arrived with power? Was He referring to His transfiguration? (*Mark 9:1-8*)
- (10) Did Jesus actually intend for His followers to mutilate their bodies? (*Mark 9:43-48*)
- (11) What did Jesus mean when He said that He came "to give His life as a ransom for many?" In what sense was Jesus' death a ransom? (*Mark 10:45*)
- (12) Did Jesus curse the fig tree simply because it had no fruit, or did His action

have a deeper meaning? (*Mark 11:12-14*)

(13) How does God's statement that He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob indicate that the dead will rise? What did Jesus mean when He said that "God isn't the God of the dead, but of the living?" (*Mark 12:26-27*)

(14) What is the abomination that brings desolation?
(*Dan. 8:13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; Matt. 24:15-28; Mark 13:14-23*)

(15) Did God actually forsake Jesus? Why did Jesus think that He had? (*Mark 15:34*)

Luke

CHAPTER 1

To Theophilus^a

(1) Many people have attempted to write a historical account of the events that have taken place among us, (2) by gathering the traditions that the first eyewitnesses and servants of the word handed down to us. (3) Now since I have carefully researched all these matters for a long time, I also decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, (4) so that you can know the certainty of the things you were taught.

The Angel Gabriel Visits Zechariah

(5) During the time of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah, and his wife Elizabeth was a descendant of Aaron as well. (6) Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, for they lived blameless lives and obeyed all the Lord's commandments and regulations. (7) But they had no children, because Elizabeth was unable to become pregnant, and she and her husband were getting on in years.

(8) Now on one occasion, Zechariah was serving as a priest before God, since it was his division's turn to be on duty in the temple. (9) And according to priestly custom, he was chosen by lot^b to go into the Lord's sanctuary and burn incense. (10) Meanwhile, all the worshipers were praying outside at the hour when the incense was offered.

(11) Then Zechariah saw an angel of the Lord, standing to the right of the altar of incense, (12) and he was startled and filled with fear at the sight. (13) But the angel said to him, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard! Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to name him John. (14) He will bring you joy and gladness, and many people will rejoice over his birth. (15) For he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He will never drink wine or any other fermented beverage,^c and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb.

(16) What is more, he will turn many of the people of Israel back to the Lord their God. (17) For he will go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of parents toward their children, and disobedient hearts to the wisdom of the righteous—to prepare a people who are ready for the Lord's arrival."^d

(18) But Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an elderly man, and my wife is getting on in years." (19) At this, the angel replied, "I am Gabriel—the one who stands in the immediate presence of God! And I was sent to speak with you and bring you this good news. (20) However, since you did not believe my message, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day this happens. For my words will be fulfilled at the appointed time."

(21) Now the people who were waiting for Zechariah were wondering why he was staying in the sanctuary so long. (22) And when he finally came out, he kept motioning to them, but he couldn't speak. Then they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary.

(23) Later, when Zechariah's period of service was completed, he returned home. (24) And sometime after this, his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and remained in seclusion for five months. (25) "The Lord has done this for me!" she exclaimed. "At last, He has shown me His favor and taken away my disgrace among the people!"^c

The Angel Gabriel Visits Mary

(26) In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy,^f God sent the angel Gabriel to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, (27) with a message for a virgin whose name was Mary. She was engaged to a man named Joseph, who came from David's family. (28) So the angel entered her home and said to her, "Greetings, highly favored one; the Lord is with you!"^g

(29) Now Mary was stunned by these words, and she tried to figure out what kind of greeting this might be. (30) Then the angel said to her, "Don't be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God! (31) You will become pregnant and give birth to a Son, and you are to name Him Jesus. (32) He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His ancestor^h David, (33) and He will reign over Israel forever. His kingdom will never end!"

(34) But Mary asked the angel, "How can this happen, since I have never slept with a man?" (35) And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the Child will be holy from birth, and He will be called the Son of God. (36) Furthermore, your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age. It was said that she was unable to become pregnant, but this is already her sixth month. (37) For nothing is impossible with God."

(38) "I am the Lord's servant," Mary replied. "May everything you have promised be done for me." And with that, the angel left her.

Mary Visits Elizabeth

(39) A few days later, Mary got ready and hurried off to a town in the Judean hill country, (40) where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. (41) And as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb. Then Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, (42) and she cried out in a loud voice, "How blessed you are among women, and how blessed is the Child you will bear! (43) But who am I, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? (44) For as soon as I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. (45) Yes, how blessedⁱ you are for believing that the Lord will fulfill His promises to

you.”

Mary’s Song (The Magnificat)

(46) Then Mary said:

“My entire being keeps praising the greatness of the Lord,
(47) and my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior.
(48) For He has looked kindly on His lowly servant girl!
From now on, all generations will consider me blessed,
(49) because the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is His name!
(50) From generation to generation,
He shows mercy to those who fear Him.
(51) He has displayed the power of His arm—
He has scattered the proud, with their scheming hearts.
(52) He has torn mighty rulers down from their thrones
and exalted the humble.
(53) He has satisfied the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away with empty hands.
(54) He has come to help His servant Israel.
He has remembered the mercy
(55) He promised our ancestors—
to Abraham and his descendants^j forever.”

(56) So Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months, and then she returned home.

The Birth of John the Baptist

(57) When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. (58) And when her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, they rejoiced with her. (59) Then they came to circumcise the child on the eighth day,^k and they were planning to name him after his father Zechariah. (60) “No!” his mother insisted. “He must be called John.” (61) “But none of your relatives have that name,” they replied. (62) So they motioned to the child’s father, to find out what he wanted to name him. (63) At this, Zechariah asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone’s amazement, he wrote, “His name is John.” (64) Suddenly, his speech was restored, and he started praising God.

(65) Now all their neighbors were filled with awe, and throughout the Judean hill country, people kept discussing the whole matter. (66) Everyone who heard about it thought it over and asked, “What is this child going to be?” For it was clear that the Lord was with him.

Zechariah's Song (The Benedictus)

(67) Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he gave this prophecy:

(68) "Praise the Lord God of Israel!
For He has looked with favor on His people
and provided redemption for them.
(69) He has raised up a mighty Savior^d for us,
from the family of His servant David,
(70) just as He promised long ago
through His holy prophets.
(71) Now He will save us from our enemies,
and from the power of all who hate us.
(72) For He desires to show our ancestors mercy
by remembering His holy covenant—
(73) the oath He swore to our ancestor Abraham.
He has provided us (74) with deliverance
from the power of our enemies,
so we can worship in His presence without fear,
(75) in devotion and righteousness all our days.

(76) And you, child, will be called
a prophet of the Most High.
You will be the Lord's forerunner,
to prepare the way for Him,
(77) and to lead His people
to a knowledge of salvation
through the forgiveness of their sins.
(78) Because of the tender mercy of our God,
a new day from heaven will dawn on us.
(79) It will shine on those who live in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
and it will guide our feet
in the way of peace."

(80) Now as the child continued to grow, he became strong in spirit. And he remained in the desert until the time for his public appearance to Israel.

^aAlthough *Theophilus* means *friend of God*, the term was commonly used as a proper name. Inasmuch as Luke refers to *Theophilus* as "most excellent," it would seem that he was a man of high rank. However, nothing more is known of him.

^b *Lots* were small pebbles or sticks that were used to reach a decision by chance.

^c The Greek term refers to an alcoholic beverage made from grain or fruit. ^d See Mal. 4:5-6. ^e The Greek term that has been translated *people* is gender inclusive.

^f Literally, *in the sixth month*—however, verse 36 makes it clear that the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy is intended. ^g Some manuscripts read *the Lord is with you. How blessed are you among women!* ^h Or *father* or *fathers*—see also verses 55 and 72-73. ⁱ Or *happy*—the Greek term here is different from the one that has been translated *blessed* in verse 42. ^j Literally, *seed* ^k God had instructed Abraham and his descendants to circumcise their male children eight days after their birth. See Gen. 17:12. ^l Literally, *He has raised up a horn of salvation*—the term *horn* symbolizes strength.

CHAPTER 2

The Birth of Jesus

(1) In those days, Caesar Augustus^a issued a decree for a census to be taken throughout the entire Roman world. (2) This census was the first of its kind, and it was conducted when Quirinius was governor of Syria.^b (3) So all the people traveled to their ancestral towns to register.

(4) Then Joseph went up from the Galilean town of Nazareth to the town of David in Judea known as Bethlehem, because he was one of David's descendants. (5) He went there to register with his fiancée Mary, who was pregnant.

(6) And while they were there, the time came for her to have her Baby. (7) So she gave birth to her firstborn Son, and after she had wrapped Him in strips of cloth, she laid Him in a manger,^c because there was no room for them in the guest chamber.^d

The Shepherds and the Angel

(8) Now in that region, there were shepherds living out in the fields who were taking turns watching their flock through the night. (9) Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord gleamed around them, and they were terribly frightened. (10) But the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid! I am bringing you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. (11) Your Savior, Who is Christ^e the Lord, was born today in the town of David. (12) And this sign will help you recognize Him. You will find a Baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger."

The Angels' Song (The Gloria in Excelsis)

(13) At that moment, a multitude of beings from the heavenly army appeared with the angel. They were praising God and saying,

(14) "Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth, peace to those
who enjoy His good will."^f

(15) Now after the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." (16) So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph with the Baby, Who was lying in the manger.

(17) And as soon as the shepherds had seen Him, they told everyone about the message they had received regarding this Child. (18) And all the people who heard their story were amazed at what they were saying. (19) But Mary kept all these

things treasured up in her heart, and she continued to ponder them. (20) Then the shepherds returned to their animals, glorifying and praising God because of everything they had heard and seen. For it was just as they had been told.

Jesus Is Circumcised

(21) Eight days later,^g when the Child was circumcised, He was named Jesus—the name the angel gave Him before He was conceived.

Jesus Is Dedicated

(22) Then the time came for Mary and Jesus to be purified, in keeping with the law of Moses,^h and His parents took Him up to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord. (23) For it is written in the law of the Lord: “Every firstborn male will be considered holy to the Lord.”ⁱ (24) They also offered a sacrifice, in keeping with the statement in the law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”^j

God’s Promise to Simeon

(25) Now there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the promised One Who would comfort Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. (26) In fact, the Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord’s Christ. (27) So guided by the Spirit, he entered the temple.

Simeon’s Song (The Nunc Dimittis)

Then Joseph and Mary brought in the Child Jesus, to do what the law required for Him, (28) and Simeon took Him in his arms as he praised God in these words:

(29) “O Sovereign Lord, now You can let Your servant
depart in peace, according to Your word.

(30) For my eyes have seen Your Salvation,

(31) which You have publicly prepared
before all the people—

(32) a Light of revelation to the Gentiles,
and the Glory of Your people Israel!”

Simeon’s Prophecy

(33) Now the Child’s father and mother were filled with wonder at the things that were being said about Him. (34) Then Simeon blessed them and said to His mother Mary, “This Child is destined to bring about the falling and rising of many people in Israel. He will be a Sign that will cause contention, (35) and as a result of this, the secret thoughts of many minds will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own life as well.”

Anna Meets Jesus

(36) There was also a prophetess named Anna—the daughter of Phanuel, who came from the tribe of Asher. She was an elderly woman who had lived with her husband for seven years after her youth, (37) and then as a widow to the age of 84.^k She never left the temple, but continued worshipping there night and day with fasting and prayer. (38) And at that very moment, she came up and began thanking God and speaking about the Child to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

The Return to Nazareth

(39) So after Joseph and Mary had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to their hometown of Nazareth in Galilee. (40) And as the Child grew larger and stronger, He was filled with wisdom, and God’s favor was with Him.

The Boy Jesus in the Temple

(41) Every year, Jesus’ parents went to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover Festival, (42) and when He was twelve years old, they made the journey as usual. (43) Now after the festival was over and His parents had set out for home, the Boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem without their knowledge. (44) Thinking He was with their fellow travelers, they continued on for a day. Then they started looking for Him among their relatives and friends, (45) but they couldn’t find Him. So they returned to Jerusalem and continued their search. (46) Finally, they found Him after three days. He was sitting in the temple with the teachers around Him, listening to them and asking them questions. (47) And everyone who heard Him was amazed at His insight and the answers He gave. (48) But when His parents saw Him, they were astonished. “Son, why have You treated us this way?” His mother asked. “Your father and I have been worried sick looking for You.”

(49) “Why were you looking for Me?” Jesus responded. “Didn’t you know that I had to be in My Father’s house?” (50) However, they did not understand what He meant. (51) Then He went back to Nazareth with them and continued living under their guidance. But His mother kept all these things treasured up in her heart. (52) Meanwhile, Jesus was growing in wisdom and maturity,^l and in favor with God and humanity.^m

^aCaesar Augustus was emperor of Rome from 30 B.C. to A.D. 14. ^bOr *This census was conducted before Quirinius was governor of Syria.* ^cThe Greek term probably denotes a feeding trough for animals, although it can also mean a stable. ^dOr *no room for them at the inn.* ^eThe Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. See also verse 26. ^fSome manuscripts read “*Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, good will to human beings.*” ^gGod had instructed Abraham and his descendants to circumcise their male children eight days after their birth. See Gen. 17:12. ^hSee Lev. 12. ⁱEx. 13:2, 12, 15 ^jLev. 12:8 ^kOr . . . (37) and then as a widow for 84 years. The meaning of the Greek

is uncertain. ^l Or *stature*, ^m The Greek term that has been translated *humanity* is gender inclusive.

CHAPTER 3

The Fifteenth Year of Tiberius Caesar

(1) Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar,^a Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod was tetrarch^b of Galilee, his brother Philip was tetrarch in the region of Iturea and Traconitis, Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, (2) and Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests. Then the word of the Lord came to John, the son of Zechariah, while he was in the desert, (3) and he went into all the region around the Jordan River, preaching a baptism of repentance, for the forgiveness of sins.

(4) This fulfilled the prophecy in the book of Isaiah:

“A voice is crying aloud in the desert—
prepare the way for the Lord!
Make His paths straight!
(5) Every ravine will be filled up,
and every mountain and hill will be leveled.
The curved roads will be straightened;
the rough roads will be made smooth,
(6) and the entire human race^c
will see God’s salvation.”^d

A Sample of John’s Preaching

(7) Now crowds of people were coming out to be baptized by John, and he went on to speak to them in these terms: “You poisonous vipers! Who warned you to flee from God’s coming anger? (8) Produce deeds that are consistent with repentance, and don’t begin saying to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor.’^e For I tell you that God can raise up descendants^f for Abraham out of these stones. (9) The axe has already been laid at the roots of the trees, and every tree that fails to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”

(10) “So what should we do?” the crowds kept asking him. (11) And John answered, “Whoever has two shirts must share one with the person who has none, and whoever has a supply of food must do the same.”

(12) Then a group of tax collectors also came to be baptized. “Teacher,” they asked him, “what should we do?” (13) “Don’t collect any more money than you

have been told to collect,” John responded. (14) And even some soldiers started asking him, “What about us? What should we do?” “Don’t use threats or slander to extort money from people,” John replied. “And be content with your pay.”

(15) Now the people were filled with rising expectations, and all of them were wondering if John might be the Christ.⁸ (16) So he gave his answer to everyone: “I am baptizing you with^h water. But another Man is coming Who is more powerful than I am, and I am unworthy to loosen the straps on His sandals. He will baptize you with the fire of the Holy Spirit. (17) His shovel is in His hand to clean out His threshing floor. He will gather the wheat into His barn, but He will burn up the chaff with fire that cannot be put out.” (18) And with many other appeals, John continued to proclaim the good news to the people.

(19) But Herod the tetrarch had been rebuked by John for marrying Herodias, who was his brother’s wife, and for all the other evil things he had done. (20) Then Herod topped them all off by locking John up in prison.

John Baptizes Jesus

(21) Now on one occasion, when all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized as well. And as He was praying, heaven opened, (22) and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form like a dove. Then a voice from heaven said, “You are My Son, Whom I love; with You, I am pleased.”

The Family History of Jesus Christ

(23) Jesus was about 30 years old when He began His ministry. He was the Son (so it was thought) of Joseph, and a Descendant^l of Heli, (24) of Matthat, of Levi, of Melki, of Jannai, of Joseph, (25) of Mattathias, of Amos, of Nahum, of Esli, of Naggai, (26) of Maath, of Mattathias, of Semein, of Josech, of Joda, (27) of Joanan, of Rhesa, of Zerubbabel, of Shealtiel, of Neri, (28) of Melki, of Addi, of Cosam, of Elmadam, of Er, (29) of Joshua, of Eliezer, of Jorim, of Matthat, of Levi, (30) of Simeon, of Judah, of Joseph, of Jonam, of Eliakim, (31) of Melea, of Menna, of Mattatha, of Nathan, of David, (32) of Jesse, of Obed, of Boaz, of Salmon,^j of Nahshon, (33) of Amminadab, of Ram,^k of Hezron, of Perez, of Judah, (34) of Jacob, of Isaac, of Abraham, of Terah, of Nahor, (35) of Serug, of Reu, of Peleg, of Eber, of Shelah, (36) of Cainan,^l of Arphaxad, of Shem, of Noah, of Lamech, (37) of Methuselah, of Enoch, of Jared, of Mahalalel, of Kenan, (38) of Enosh, of Seth, of Adam, and of God.

^aTiberius Caesar was emperor of Rome from A.D. 14 to A.D. 37, and his fifteenth year was probably either A.D. 27-28 or A.D. 28-29. It is uncertain whether Luke counted the period of time between the death of Augustus and the beginning of the new regnal year as the first year of Tiberius. For this reason, the fifteenth year of Tiberius cannot be determined with complete precision from the historical data. ^bThis was Herod Antipas. (See also verses 19-20.) He was one of the sons of Herod the Great, who was ruling when Jesus was born. The term *tetrarch* indicates that he was the ruler over one of four districts in Palestine. Philip was tetrarch in the

region of Iturea and Traconitis, to the east of the Jordan River. Archelaus (another son of Herod the Great) had been tetrarch of Judea before he was deposed and replaced by a Roman governor in A.D. 6. The fourth tetrarch, Lysanias, is an obscure figure. He ruled the region of Abilene, which was northwest of Damascus. ^c Literally, *all flesh* ^d Isa. 40:3-5 ^e Or *father*. ^f Or *children* ^g The Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. ^h Or *in*—this applies to each use of *with* in verse 16. ⁱ Luke’s genealogical information may denote a father-son relationship or the beginning of a family line leading up to a more distant descendant. Many expositors believe that Luke lists Mary’s ancestry, while Matthew lists the ancestry of Joseph. (See Matt. 1:1-16.) The fact that women’s names are commonly omitted from biblical genealogies could account for the absence of Mary’s name in verse 23. ^j Some early manuscripts read *Sala*. ^k The manuscripts vary widely in their readings here. ^l Some manuscripts omit *of Cainan*.

CHAPTER 4

Satan Tempts Jesus

(1) Now Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit as He left the Jordan River, and He was led by the Spirit into the desert, (2) where the devil continued to tempt Him for 40 days. During all that time, He had nothing to eat, and when it was over, He was very hungry.

(3) At this point, the devil said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become a loaf of bread.” (4) But Jesus answered him, “It is written:

‘Human beings^a do not live on bread alone.’”^b

(5) Then the devil took Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world^c in a moment of time. (6) “I will give You all this power and splendor,” the devil told Him. “It has been handed over to me, and I can give it to anyone I please. (7) So worship me just once, and it will all be Yours!” (8) But Jesus answered him, “It is written:

‘You must worship the Lord your God
and serve Him alone.’”^d

(9) Then the devil led Him into Jerusalem and placed Him on the highest point of the temple. “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here,” the devil told Him. (10) “For it is written:

‘He will command His angels to guard you.
(11) And they will hold you up in their hands—
to keep you from dashing your foot against a stone.’”^e

(12) But Jesus answered him, “It has also been said:

‘You must not tempt the Lord your God.’”^f

(13) Now after the devil had exhausted all his temptations, he left Jesus until a more favorable time.

Jesus Begins His Galilean Ministry

(14) Then Jesus returned to Galilee, and the power of the Spirit was with Him. The news about Him spread all over the surrounding region, (15) and everyone kept praising Him as He began teaching in their synagogues.

Nazareth Rejects Jesus

(16) Now when Jesus came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day as He usually did and stood up to read.

(17) The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him, and He unrolled it and found the place where it said:

(18) “The Spirit of the Lord is on Me,
because He has anointed Me.
He has sent Me to proclaim good news
to the destitute,^g
to announce freedom
for the captives,
and new eyesight
for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
(19) and to proclaim the year
of the Lord’s favor.”^h

(20) Then Jesus rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down.ⁱ Meanwhile, everyone in the synagogue was gazing intently at Him, (21) and He began by saying, “Today, while you are listening, this scripture has met its fulfillment!”^j (22) At this, all the people started speaking out against Him, for they were astonished at the message about grace that flowed from His lips. “Isn’t this Joseph’s Son?” they kept asking.

(23) So Jesus said to them, “You will probably quote this proverb to Me, ‘Physician, heal yourself!’ and you will say, ‘We heard about what You did in Capernaum. Now perform the same wonders here in Your hometown.’”

(24) But He continued, “Truly I tell you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown. (25) I assure you that there were many widows in Israel during Elijah’s time, when there was no rain for three and a half years, and a severe famine came over all the land. (26) Yet Elijah wasn’t sent to any of them. He was sent to a widow in Zarephath, near Sidon.^k (27) And there were many people in Israel with leprosy^l during the prophet Elisha’s time. Yet no one except Naaman the Syrian

was cured.”^m

(28) Now all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage when they heard this, (29) and they got up and drove Jesus out of town. Then they led Him to the edge of the hill on which their town was built and tried to throw Him over the cliff. (30) But He walked right through the middle of the mob and continued on His way.

Jesus Drives Out a Demon

(31) Afterward, Jesus went down to the Galilean town of Capernaum, where He continued teaching the people on the Sabbath. (32) And they were amazed at His teaching because He spoke with authority.

(33) But there was a man in the synagogue who was possessed by the spirit of an evil demon, and he screamed at the top of his voice, (34) “Ha! What common ground is there between us, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know Who You are—the Holy One of God!” (35) Then Jesus sternly commanded the demon, “Be quiet and come out of him!” At this, the demon threw the man down in the middle of the crowd and left him without hurting him.

(36) Now all the people were amazed, and they kept asking one another, “What is this message? He gives orders to the evil spirits with authority and power, and they come out!” (37) So news about Jesus continued to spread all over the surrounding region.

Jesus Visits Simon’s House

(38) Later, Jesus left the synagogue and went to Simon’s house, where Simon’s mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and Jesus was asked to help her. (39) So He bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. Then she got up at once and began caring for their needs.

Jesus Heals Many People

(40) Now as the sun was setting, all the people brought their friends who were suffering from various diseases to Jesus, and He laid His hands on them one by one and started healing them. (41) Demons were also leaving many people, and they kept screaming, “You are the Son of God!” But Jesus rebuked them and banned them from speaking because they knew He was the Christ.ⁿ

(42) Finally, when daylight came, Jesus left the house and went out to a lonely place. At this, the people came looking for Him and tried to keep Him from leaving them. (43) But He told them, “I have to preach the good news about the kingdom of God to the other towns as well, for this is what I was sent to do.” (44) So He continued preaching in the synagogues of Judea.^o

^a The Greek term that has been translated ‘*Human beings*’ is gender inclusive.

^bDeut. 8:3 (Septuagint) ^cThe Greek term that has been translated *world* refers to the inhabited world. ^dDeut. 6:13 ^ePs. 91:11-12 (Septuagint) ^fDeut. 6:16 (Septuagint) ^gSome manuscripts read *He has sent Me to proclaim good news to the destitute, to heal the brokenhearted.* ^hIsa. 61:1-2 ⁱIn the synagogues of Jesus' time, readers showed their respect for the scriptures by standing. However, it was customary for a rabbi to be seated when he addressed the congregation. ^jThis was a startling statement, since Isa. 61:1-2 was regarded as a prophecy that foretold the work of the Messiah. When Jesus told the people that Isa. 61:1-2 had met its fulfillment, they suddenly realized that He was claiming to be the Messiah. ^kSee 1 Kings 17:7-24. ^lThe term *leprosy* was probably used for several different skin diseases. ^mSee 2 Kings 5. ⁿThe Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. ^oSome manuscripts read *the synagogues of Galilee*. However, the best manuscripts read *the synagogues of Judea*. Probably *Judea* is used in a wider sense here, meaning *the country of the Jews*.

CHAPTER 5

Jesus' First Disciples

(1) On one occasion, Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret,^a and the people were crowding in on Him to hear the word of God. (2) Then He noticed two boats that were docked by the lakeside, for the fishermen had gotten out of them to wash their nets. (3) So Jesus stepped into one of the boats (the one belonging to Simon) and asked him to push off a little way from the shore. Then He sat down and started teaching the people from the boat.

(4) Now after Jesus had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Push off into the deep water, and let down your nets for a catch." (5) "But Master," Simon replied, "we worked hard all night and caught nothing. However, if You say so, I'll let down the nets." (6) And as soon as the men had done this, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. (7) So they motioned for their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they filled both boats so full that they were about to sink.

(8) When Simon Peter saw what had happened, he fell at Jesus' knees. "Go away from me, Lord!" he exclaimed. "I am a sinful man!" (9) For Simon and all his comrades were amazed at the catch of fish they had made, (10) and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were Simon's business partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid! From now on, you will be catching people."^b (11) And after they had brought the boats back to shore, they left everything and followed Him.

Jesus Heals a Man with Leprosy

(12) While Jesus was in a particular town, a man who was covered with leprosy^c saw Him and fell down, with his face to the ground. “Sir,” he begged Jesus, “if You want to, You can make me clean.” (13) At this, Jesus reached out His hand and touched the man. “I want to,” He answered. “Be clean!” And immediately, the leprosy left him. (14) Then Jesus gave him these instructions: “Don’t tell anyone about this. But go and show yourself to the priests, and offer the sacrifice Moses commanded^d to prove to them that you are cured.”

(15) Even so, the news about Jesus continued to spread all the more, and huge crowds started gathering to listen to Him and to have their diseases healed. (16) Nevertheless, He was always slipping away to lonely places and praying.

Jesus Heals a Paralyzed Man

(17) One day, while Jesus was teaching, some Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting around Him. (They had come from every village in Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem.) And the power of the Lord was present for Him to heal the sick.^e (18) Suddenly, a group of men appeared, who were carrying a paralyzed man on a mat. They were trying to bring him into the house and lay him in front of Jesus, (19) but because of the crowd, they couldn’t find a way to get him in.

Finally, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles, mat and all, right into the middle of the crowd in front of Jesus. (20) Now when He saw their faith, Jesus exclaimed, “Man, your sins have been forgiven!” (21) At this, the scribes and the Pharisees started thinking to themselves, “Who is this Fellow? He’s speaking blasphemies! Only God can forgive sins!”

(22) But Jesus knew what they were thinking, so He asked them, “Why are you harboring such thoughts in your minds? (23) Which is easier to say, ‘Your sins have been forgiven?’ or ‘Get up and walk?’ (24) However, I will prove to you that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” And with that, He said to the paralyzed man, “I tell you, get up, pick up your mat, and go home!”

(25) And immediately, the man stood up right in front of them, picked up the mat he had been lying on, and went home, praising God. (26) Then all the people were gripped with the wildest amazement, and they began praising God as well. For they were filled with awe and kept declaring, “We have seen unbelievable things^f today!”

Levi Becomes a Disciple

(27) Now after this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector named Levi^g who was sitting in his booth. “Follow Me!” Jesus told him. (28) And Levi got up and left everything behind to follow Him.

(29) Some time later, Levi prepared a great banquet at his home for Jesus, and a large crowd of tax collectors and other people were reclining^h at the table with Jesus' disciples. (30) Then the Pharisees and the scribes who belonged to their party started grumbling at the disciples. "Why do you keep eating and drinking with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" they asked. (31) At this, Jesus answered them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor, but sick people do. (32) I haven't come to call righteous people, but sinners to repentance."

A Discussion about Fasting

(33) Then they said to Him, "John's disciples and the Pharisees' disciples are often fasting and praying, but Yours keep eating and drinking."ⁱ (34) Jesus responded, "Are you going to make the wedding guests fast while the groom is still with them? (35) But the time is coming when the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast."

(36) Now He went on to share this illustration with them: "No one tears a piece of cloth off a new robe and sews it on an old robe. If he does, the new cloth will tear away from the old one, and the piece from the new won't match the old. (37) And no one pours new wine^j into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, and then it will run out, and the skins will be ruined. (38) No, new wine goes into new wineskins.

(39) What is more, no one who has been drinking old wine wants new wine. For he says, 'the old wine is good!'"

^aThe *Lake of Gennesaret* was more commonly known as the *Lake of Galilee*. ^bThe Greek term that has been translated *people* is gender inclusive. ^cThe term *leprosy* was probably used for several different skin diseases. ^dSee Lev. 14:1-32.

^eSome manuscripts read *One day, while Jesus was teaching, some Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting around Him. They had come from every village in Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem, and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.* Other manuscripts read *One day, while Jesus was teaching, some Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting around Him. Meanwhile, people had assembled from every village in Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem, and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.*

^fLiterally, "*We have seen paradoxes*" ^gIt seems that Levi was also known as *Matthew*. See Matt. 9:9-13. ^hIn the time of Jesus, people who were attending a banquet commonly reclined on couches as they ate. ⁱSome manuscripts read *Then they asked Him, "Why is it that John's disciples and the Pharisees' disciples are often fasting and praying, while Yours are eating and drinking?"*

^jThe term *new wine* refers to unfermented or slightly fermented grape juice. If grape juice was poured into an old wineskin, the fermenting juice would produce gases, causing the weakened wineskin to burst. Only aged wine that was no longer fermenting could be stored in old wineskins.

CHAPTER 6

The Lord of the Sabbath

(1) Now as Jesus was walking through the grainfields one Sabbath,^a His disciples started picking the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands, and eating them.

(2) At this, a group of Pharisees asked, “Why are you doing something that is unlawful on the Sabbath?”

(3) So Jesus answered them, “Haven’t you read what David did when he and his men were hungry? (4) He went into the house of God and took the sacred bread and ate it, and he also gave some to his comrades—even though it was unlawful to eat it—it was only for the priests.” (5) Then Jesus added, “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

The Man with a Paralyzed Hand

(6) On another Sabbath, Jesus went into the synagogue and started teaching. Now there was a man in the congregation whose right hand was paralyzed,^b (7) and the scribes and the Pharisees were watching closely to see if Jesus would heal on the Sabbath. (For they wanted to find a reason to bring a legal charge against Him.) (8) But Jesus knew what they were thinking. So He said to the man with the paralyzed hand, “Get up and stand in the middle of the synagogue.” And the man got up and stood there.

(9) Then Jesus said to His enemies, “Let Me ask you a question. Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?” (10) And after He had looked around at them all, He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” So the man did as he was told, and his hand was completely restored.

(11) But Jesus’ enemies were furious, and they began discussing with one another what they could do to Him.

The Twelve Apostles

(12) About that time, Jesus went off into the mountains to pray, and He spent the entire night in prayer to God. (13) When daylight came, He called His disciples together and chose twelve of them, whom He also designated “apostles”—(14) Simon (whom He named Peter), Andrew (Simon’s brother), James, John, Philip, Bartholomew,^c (15) Matthew,^d Thomas, James, the son of Alphaeus, Simon, who was called the Zealot,^e (16) Judas,^f the son of James, and Judas, the man from Kerioth,^g who became a traitor.

The Sermon on the Plain^h

(17) Afterward, Jesus came down the mountain with them and stood on a level

place, where a huge crowd of His disciples had gathered. There were also many people from all over Judea, Jerusalem, and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon, (18) who had come to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases. Even those who were troubled by evil spirits were being healed, (19) and the entire crowd was trying to touch Him, because power was coming out from Him and healing them all.

Beatitudes and Woes

(20) Then Jesus gazed at His disciples and said:

“How blessed^d are you who are destitute,
for the kingdom of God belongs to you.
(21) How blessed are you who are hungry now,
for you will be satisfied.
How blessed are you who are crying now,
for you will laugh.

(22) How blessed are you when people^e hate you and shun you, when they heap insults on you and slander your name for the Son of Man’s sake. (23) Rejoice and leap for joy on that day, because you will have a great reward in heaven! For this is the very way their ancestors^k used to treat the prophets.

(24) But woe to you who are rich,
for you are having your time of comfort.
(25) Woe to you who are well-fed now,
for you will go hungry.
Woe to you who are laughing now,
for you will mourn and cry.

(26) Woe to you when all the people speak well of you. For this is the very way their ancestors used to treat the false prophets.

Love for Enemies

(27) But I tell you who are listening—love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; (28) bless those who curse you, and pray for those who abuse you. (29) If someone punches you on the cheek, offer him the other one also. And if someone takes away your robe, let him have your shirt as well. (30) Continue giving to everyone who asks for something, and if anyone takes away what belongs to you, don’t keep demanding it back.

The Golden Rule

(31) Always treat others as you would like them to treat you. (32) If you love people who love you, what credit will you get? Even ‘sinners’ love those who love them. (33) If you do good to people who treat you well, what credit will you

get? Even ‘sinners’ do as much. (34) And if you lend money to people you expect to receive something from, what credit will you get? Even ‘sinners’ lend to other ‘sinners,’ so they can receive just as much back.

(35) But you must love your enemies and treat them well and lend money to them without expecting anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High. For He is kind to ungrateful and wicked people. (36) So be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Judging Others

(37) Do not judge, and you will never be judged. Do not condemn, and you will never be condemned. Always forgive, and you will be forgiven. (38) Continue giving, and gifts will be given to you. People will pour a generous quantity that has been pressed down and shaken together into your lap until it overflows.¹ For the quantity you give will be the quantity you get back.”

(39) Now Jesus also shared an illustration with them: “Can a blind man guide another blind man? Won’t they both fall into the ditch? (40) And a disciple is not superior to his teacher. But anyone who has been fully trained is like his teacher.

(41) Why do you keep looking at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the board in your own eye? (42) How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself never see the board in your own eye? You hypocrite! First take the board out of your own eye, and then your vision will be clear enough to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

The Fruit of Trees and People

(43) No good tree keeps producing bad^m fruit, nor does a badⁿ tree keep producing good fruit. (44) You can always recognize a particular tree by its own fruit. People don’t gather figs from thornbushes or pick clusters of grapes from brambles. (45) And a good person brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, while an evil person brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the words that the mouth speaks flow from what is in the heart.

(46) Why do you keep calling Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and never do what I tell you? (47) I will describe what the person is like who comes to Me and hears My words and puts them into practice. (48) He is like someone building a house who dug deep and laid the foundation on solid rock. And when a flood came, the river dashed against that house, but couldn’t shake it. For the house was well-built.^o

(49) However, the person who hears My words and fails to put them into practice is like someone who built a house on the ground without a foundation. And as soon as the river dashed against it, down it went! And it was a total loss!”

¹Some manuscripts read *on the second-first Sabbath*. Textual scholars who

accept this obscure reading suggest that it may refer to the second Sabbath after Passover, which was the first Sabbath after the Festival of Unleavened Bread. However, the best manuscripts simply read *one Sabbath*.^b Literally, *withered*,^c *Bartholomew* means *son of Talmai*. His personal name was probably *Nathanael*. See John 1:43-51.^d It seems that *Matthew* was also known as *Levi*. Compare Matt. 9:9-13 with Mark 2:14-17 and Luke 5:27-32.^e The *Zealots* were an extremist political group that called for violent rebellion against Rome.^f It seems that this *Judas* was also known as *Thaddaeus*. See Matt. 10:3 and Mark 3:18.^g *Kerioth* was a town in southern Judea.^h Most expositors equate Luke's *Sermon on the Plain* with Matthew's *Sermon on the Mount*. Compare Matt. 5-7 with Luke 6:17-49. Apparently, Jesus came part way down the mountain to a level spot, where He began speaking to the people.ⁱ Or *happy*—this applies to each use of *blessed* in verses 20-22.^j The Greek term that has been translated *people, person, others, or someone* in verses 22, 31, 45, 48, and 49 is gender inclusive.^k Or *fathers*—see also verse 26.^l This seems to be a description of a generous gift of grain.^m Or *worthless*ⁿ Or *rotten*^o Some manuscripts read *For its foundation had been built on rock*.

CHAPTER 7

Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant

(1) Now after Jesus had finished speaking to the people, He entered Capernaum, (2) where a centurion's^s servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. (3) But the centurion had heard about Jesus, and he sent some Jewish elders to ask Him to come and heal his servant. (4) So the elders went to Jesus and began pleading earnestly with Him. "This man deserves a favor from You," they said. (5) "He loves our nation, and he built our synagogue for us."

(6) At this, Jesus started off with them, and He wasn't far from the house when the centurion sent some friends with this message: "Sir, don't keep troubling Yourself. I am unworthy to have You under my roof, (7) and that is why I did not consider it appropriate to come to You in person. But speak the word, and my servant will be healed. (8) For I myself am always under authority, and I have soldiers under me. I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

(9) When Jesus heard these words, He was amazed at the man, and He turned to the people who were following Him and said, "I tell you, I have never found such faith in Israel." (10) Then the centurion's friends returned home and found the servant in good health.

Jesus Raises a Widow's Son

(11) Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and He was accompanied by His disciples and a huge crowd of people. (12) As He approached the town gate, a dead man was being carried out in a funeral procession—the only son of a woman who was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her.

(13) Now when the Lord saw her, He was filled with pity for her. “Don’t cry,” He said. (14) With that, He went up to the open casket to touch it, and the people who were carrying it stopped. Then He said, “Young man, I tell you to get up!” (15) At this, the dead man sat up and started talking, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

(16) Meanwhile, all the people were filled with awe, and they began praising God. “A great prophet has appeared among us!” they exclaimed. “God has visited His people!” (17) So this account of what Jesus had done spread all over Judea^b and the surrounding region.

A Question from John the Baptist

(18) Some time later, John’s disciples brought him a report about all these things, and he called two of them (19) and sent them to the Lord^c with this question: “Are You the Coming One,^d or should we keep waiting for someone else?” (20) So the men went to Jesus and said, “John the Baptist sent us to ask You, ‘Are You the Coming One, or should we keep waiting for someone else?’”

(21) Now during the time they were there, Jesus healed many people from diseases, painful disorders, and evil spirits, and He gave sight to many blind people. (22) Then Jesus replied, “Go back and give John another report about what you have seen and heard. The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with leprosy^e are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the destitute. (23) How blessed^f is the person who doesn’t stumble over Me!”

Jesus Praises John the Baptist

(24) As John’s messengers were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about him. “What did you go out into the desert to look at? A reed being blown by the wind? (25) But really, what did you go out to see? Someone^g dressed in soft robes? No, people who wear fine clothing and live in luxury are in kings’ palaces. (26) So what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and far more than a prophet! (27) This is the man about whom it is written:

‘See, I am sending My messenger ahead of You,
and he will prepare Your way before You.’^h

(28) I tell you, among those born of women, no one is greater than John. But the person who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.’ⁱ

(29) (All the people who listened to John, including the tax collectors, acknowledged that God’s way was right when they received John’s baptism. (30) But the Pharisees and the experts in the law rejected God’s plan for them when they refused John’s baptism.)

(31) “How can I describe the people of this generation? What are they like? (32) They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to each other:

‘We played the flute for you, and you didn’t dance.
We sang funeral songs, and you didn’t cry.’

(33) For John the Baptist did not come eating bread and drinking wine, and yet you keep saying he has a demon. (34) But the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you keep saying, ‘Look! A glutton and a drunk, a friend of tax collectors and “sinners”!’ (35) Nevertheless, the way of wisdom is proven right by all who accept it.”^j

A Woman Anoints Jesus with Perfume

(36) On one occasion, a Pharisee invited Jesus to dinner, and He entered the Pharisee’s home and reclined^k at the table. (37) Meanwhile, a woman who was well-known in town as a “sinner” learned that Jesus was a guest in the Pharisee’s home. So she brought an alabaster bottle of perfume (38) and stood behind Jesus, crying at His feet. Then she began to moisten His feet with her tears and wipe them with her hair. Finally, she started kissing His feet very tenderly and anointing them with perfume. (39) Now when the Pharisee who had invited Jesus saw what was happening, he said to himself, “If this Fellow were a prophet,^l He would know who is touching Him and what kind of a woman she is—a ‘sinner’!”

(40) At this, Jesus spoke up. “Simon,” He said, “I have something to tell you.” “What is it, Teacher?” he responded. (41) “Two men owed money to a creditor. One owed him 500 denarii^m and the other 50. (42) Neither of them had the money to pay him back, but the creditor was kind enough to cancel both their debts. Now which of those men will love him more?” (43) “I guess the one who had the larger debt canceled,” Simon said. “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied.

(44) Then Jesus turned toward the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? When I entered your home, you didn’t give Me any water for My feet. But she has moistened My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. (45) You didn’t give Me a kiss, but she has been kissing My feet ever since I came in. (46) You didn’t anoint My head with oil, but she has anointed My feet with perfume. (47) And so I tell you, her great love proves that her many sins have been forgiven. But someone who has been forgiven little, loves little.”

(48) Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins have been forgiven.” (49) At this, the guests who were reclining at the table with Him started grumbling among themselves, “Who is this Fellow Who even forgives sins?” (50) But Jesus said to the woman,

“Your faith has saved you. Go in peace!”

^a A centurion was a commander of approximately 100 Roman soldiers. ^b *Judea* is probably used in a wider sense here, meaning, *the country of the Jews*. ^c Some manuscripts read *Jesus*. ^d *The Coming One* is a Messianic title that refers to Jesus. See also verse 20. ^e The term *leprosy* was probably used for several different skin diseases. ^fOr *happy* ^g The Greek term that has been translated *Someone* in verse 25 and *people* in verse 31 is gender inclusive. ^h Mal. 3:1 ⁱ Jesus regarded John the Baptist as the greatest of the prophets because he stood on the threshold of the new age of the kingdom of God. But the most humble follower of Jesus is already a full participant in that kingdom, and is, in this sense, greater than John. ^j Literally, *by all her children*. ^kIn the time of Jesus, people who were attending a feast commonly reclined on couches as they ate. See also verse 49. ^l Some manuscripts read *the Prophet*. This alternate reading is a Messianic title that refers to Jesus. ^m The denarius was a silver coin that was minted by the Romans. In the time of Christ, it was the usual daily wage for the average worker.

CHAPTER 8

A Group of Women Follow Jesus

(1) Soon after this, Jesus started traveling through the towns and villages in the region, preaching the good news about the kingdom of God. And He was accompanied by the twelve, (2) along with some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases. Among them were Mary (called Magdalene), from whom seven demons had been expelled, (3) Joanna, the wife of Herod’s foreman Cuza, Susanna, and many others. These women were supporting Jesus^a out of their own financial resources.

The Parable of the Sower

(4) Now a huge crowd was gathering, and as people were coming to Jesus from one town after another, He told them this parable: (5) “A farmer went out to sow his seed. And as he was scattering the seed, some of it fell along the road, where it was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the sky ate it up. (6) Some of it also fell on bedrock, and as soon as the young plants sprouted, they withered away because they had no moisture. (7) Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked the young plants. (8) Still other seed fell on good soil, and after it came up, it produced 100 times what was sown.”

When He had said this, He called out, “Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear!”

The Purpose of the Parables

(9) Later, the disciples started asking Jesus what the parable meant. (10) He replied, “The privilege of knowing the secrets about the kingdom of God has been given to you. But I speak to the rest of the people in parables, so that,

‘they can keep looking without seeing,
and listening without understanding.’^b

Jesus Explains the Parable of the Sower

(11) Now this is what the parable means. The seed is the word of God. (12) The seed that fell along the road represents the people who hear the word, but then the devil comes and takes it away from their hearts to keep them from believing and being saved.

(13) The seed that fell on bedrock represents the people who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no roots. And even though they believe for a while, when the time of testing comes, they fall away.

(14) The seed that fell among thorns represents the people who hear the word, but their faith is choked by cares and wealth and the pleasures of life, and they stop maturing.

(15) However, the seed that fell on good soil represents the people who hear the word with a good and honest heart. They keep holding onto the word, and they persist until they bear fruit.

A Lamp Under a Bowl

(16) No one lights a lamp only to cover it with a bowl or put it under a bed. Instead, he puts it on a lampstand, so the people who come in can see the light. (17) For everything that is hidden will be disclosed, and everything that is concealed will be made known and brought out in the open. (18) Be careful then, how you listen! For the person who has something will be given more, but the person who has nothing will lose even what he seems to have.”

The True Family of Jesus

(19) Now Jesus’ mother and brothers came to visit Him, but they were unable to meet with Him because of the crowd. (20) Then Jesus was told, “Your mother and brothers are standing outside, and they want to see You.” (21) But He replied, “My mother and My brothers are those who keep listening to God’s word and putting it into practice!”

Jesus Calms a Storm

(22) One day, Jesus got into a boat with His disciples and said to them, “Let’s cross over to the other side of the lake.” So they set out, (23) and Jesus fell asleep as they were sailing along. Suddenly, a violent windstorm swept down on the lake, and they were in danger as their boat was being swamped. (24) At this, they came and woke Jesus. “Master! Master!” they cried, “we’re going to drown!” Then He got up and rebuked the wind and the wild water. And with that, the storm ended, and there was calm again.

(25) “Where is your faith?” Jesus asked His disciples. But they questioned one another with awe and wonder, “Who is this Man? Even the wind and the water obey His commands!”

Jesus and the Demons

(26) Now they came to shore in the region of the Gerasenes,^c which is across the lake from Galilee. (27) And as Jesus stepped out on land, He met a man from the town who was demon-possessed. This man had gone without clothes for a long time, and he was living in the burial caves instead of a house. (28) But when He saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before Him. “What common ground is there between You and me, Jesus, Son of God Most High?” he screamed. “I beg You, don’t torture me.” (29) For Jesus was about to command the evil spirit to come out of the man. On many occasions, the spirit had violently seized him, and even though the man was repeatedly secured with chains and fetters and closely guarded, he broke the chains as the demon drove him out into lonely places.

(30) Then Jesus asked the man, “What is your name?” “Legion,”^d he replied, for many demons had entered him. (31) And the demons kept pleading with Jesus not to send them into the abyss.

(32) Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. So the demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and He gave them permission. (33) At this, they came out of the man and went into the pigs, and the herd rushed over the cliff into the lake and was drowned.

(34) Meanwhile, the herdsmen saw what had taken place, and they ran off and reported the news in the town and on the farms. (35) So the people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had been expelled. He was sitting at Jesus’ feet, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. (36) Then the herdsmen who had seen the miracle told them again how the demon-possessed man had been healed, (37) and with that, the entire population was gripped with terror, and they asked Jesus to leave. So He got into the boat and returned to Capernaum.^e

(38) Now the man from whom the demons had been expelled kept begging to go with Jesus. But Jesus sent him away (39) with these instructions: “Go back home and continue telling the people what God has done for you.” So the man went all

over town proclaiming what Jesus had done for him.

A Dead Girl and a Sick Woman

(40) When Jesus returned to Capernaum, the people welcomed Him, for they were all expecting Him. (41) Suddenly, a synagogue leader by the name of Jairus came and fell at His feet. And he began pleading with Jesus to come to his home, (42) because his only daughter, who was about twelve years old,^f was dying.

Now as Jesus was on His way, the crowds were nearly crushing Him. (43) And there was a woman among the people who had been suffering from severe bleeding for twelve years, and no one could cure her.^g (44) But when she came up behind Jesus and touched the fringe of His robe, her bleeding instantly stopped.

(45) “Who touched Me?” Jesus asked. And after everyone denied doing it, Peter spoke up. “Master,” he said, “the people are crowding You and pushing against You!” (46) But Jesus insisted, “Someone touched Me! I became aware of it when I felt power go out from Me!”

(47) Then the woman realized that she could not remain hidden. So she came trembling and fell down before Jesus. And in the presence of all the people, she explained why she had touched Him and how she had been instantly cured. (48) “Daughter, your faith has healed you,” Jesus told her. “Go in peace.”

(49) While He was still speaking, a messenger came from the synagogue leader’s home and said, “Your daughter is dead. Don’t bother the Teacher anymore.” (50) But when Jesus heard this, He told Jairus, “Don’t be afraid. Just believe, and her life will be saved.”

(51) Now when Jesus arrived at the home, He refused to let anyone go in with Him except Peter, John, James, and the child’s father and mother. (52) Meanwhile, all the people there were crying and mourning for the child. “Don’t cry,” Jesus said. “She isn’t dead; she is only sleeping.” (53) But they began laughing at Him because they knew she was dead.

(54) Nevertheless, Jesus took her by the hand and said, “Get up, My child!” (55) And her life returned, and she stood up at once. Then He told them to give her something to eat. (56) Now her parents were overcome with amazement, but He ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened.

^aSome manuscripts read *them*. ^b Isa. 6:9-10 ^c Some manuscripts read *Gergesenes*; others read *Gadarenes*. ^d A Roman legion consisted of six thousand infantry and 700 cavalry. The name *Legion* indicates that a large number of demons had taken control of the man. ^e Matt. 9:1 indicates that Jesus returned by boat to His own town, which was Capernaum. The Greek simply states that He returned—see also verse 40. ^f The girl’s age is probably mentioned to indicate that she was old enough to stand and walk. ^g Some manuscripts read *And there was a woman among the people who had been*

suffering from severe bleeding for twelve years, and even though she had spent all her livelihood on doctors, no one could cure her:

CHAPTER 9

Instructions for the Twelve

(1) Then Jesus called the twelve^a together and gave them power and authority to drive out every demon and to cure diseases. (2) And he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.^b (3) “Take nothing for the journey,” He told them—“no staff, no traveling bag, no money, and no extra shirt. (4) When you enter a home, stay there until you leave that place. (5) And if no one welcomes you, shake the dust off your feet as a warning to them when you leave their town.” (6) So the twelve set out and continued traveling from village to village, preaching the good news and healing sick people everywhere.

Herod’s Confusion about John and Jesus

(7) Now Herod the tetrarch^c heard about everything that was happening, and he was at a loss to know what to make of it. For some people were saying that John had been raised from the dead. (8) Others were saying that Elijah had appeared, and still others that one of the ancient prophets had come back to life. (9) “I beheaded John,” Herod declared. “But Who is this Man I am hearing about?” And he kept trying to see Jesus.

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

(10) When the apostles returned, they told Jesus what they had done. Then He took them with Him and went away to a town called Bethsaida, where they could be by themselves. (11) But the people found out where He was going and followed Him. So Jesus welcomed them and started speaking to them about the kingdom of God and healing those who needed to be cured.

(12) Now as the day grew late, the twelve came to Him and said, “Send the people away, so they can go to the surrounding villages and farms to find food and lodging. For we are in a lonely place here.” (13) But Jesus replied, “You must give them something to eat.” “We have five loaves of bread and two fish—and nothing more,” they responded—“unless we go and buy food for all this crowd.” (14) (There were about five thousand men.)

Nevertheless, Jesus said to His disciples, “Have the people sit down in groups of about 50.” (15) And after they had gotten everyone seated, (16) He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looked up to heaven and blessed them. Then He broke the loaves and gave them to His disciples to distribute to the people. (17)

So they all ate until they were content, and the disciples collected twelve baskets full of the broken pieces that were left over.

Peter's Declaration of Faith

(18) On one occasion, when Jesus was praying and only His disciples were with Him, He asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?" (19) They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and still others that one of the ancient prophets has come back to life."

(20) "But what about you?" He continued. "Who do you say I am?" "You are God's Christ!"^d Peter answered. (21) Then Jesus gave them a stern warning not to tell this to anyone.

Jesus Predicts His Death

(22) And He added, "The Son of Man will have to endure great suffering and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes. He will be killed and then be raised to life on the third day."

(23) Now Jesus went on speaking to all of them: "Anyone who wants to come after Me must deny himself and take up his cross every day and continue to follow Me. (24) Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of Me will find it. (25) What will anyone^e gain by winning the whole world at the cost of destroying or losing himself? (26) If anyone is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

(27) Truly I tell you, some of those standing here will not taste death until they have seen the kingdom of God."

The Transfiguration

(28) About eight days after Jesus had said this, He took Peter, John, and James and went up a mountain to pray. (29) And as He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing turned white and flashed like lightning. (30) Suddenly, two men started talking with Him. They were Moses and Elijah, (31) who were appearing in glory to discuss His departure from the world, which was about to take place at Jerusalem. (32) Now Peter and his companions were sound asleep, and when they awoke, they saw Jesus' glory and the two men standing there with Him.

(33) As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to Him, "Master, it is good that we are here. Let us put up three tents—one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." (He didn't know what he was saying.)

(34) But while he was speaking, a cloud appeared and began to cover them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. (35) Then a voice from the cloud said,

“This is My Son, Whom I have chosen.^f Continue listening to Him!” (36) And after the voice had spoken, Jesus was alone.

Now the disciples kept quiet about this, and at that time, they told no one what they had seen.

Jesus Heals a Boy with a Demon

(37) The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a huge crowd met Jesus. (38) Suddenly, a man in the crowd called out, “Teacher, I beg You to look with compassion on my son, for he is my only child. (39) A spirit keeps seizing him, and all at once, he cries out. Then the spirit throws him into convulsions, and he foams at the mouth. It seldom leaves him, and it’s always hurting him. (40) I begged Your disciples to drive it out, but they couldn’t.”

(41) “What a faithless and crooked generation!” Jesus exclaimed. “How much longer will I be with you and have to put up with you? Bring your son here.” (42) Now as the boy was coming, the demon slammed him down and threw him into a convulsion. At this, Jesus rebuked the evil spirit and healed the boy. Then He gave him back to his father. (43) And all the people were astonished at the majestic power of God.

Jesus Predicts His Death a Second Time

But while everyone was amazed at all the things Jesus was doing, He said to His disciples, (44) “Make sure these words register in your minds.^g The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of human beings.” (45) However, the disciples never grasped the meaning of this statement. It was hidden from them—so they couldn’t understand it. And they were afraid to ask Jesus about it.

True Greatness

(46) Then they got into an argument as to which of them was the greatest, (47) and Jesus knew what they were thinking. So He took a little child and had him stand by His side. (48) “Whoever welcomes this little child in My name is welcoming Me,” Jesus said. “And whoever welcomes Me is welcoming the One Who sent Me. For the person who is least among all of you is the greatest.”

The Use of Jesus’ Name

(49) At this point, John spoke up. “Master,” he said, “we saw someone driving out demons in Your name, and we tried to stop him because he didn’t belong to our group of followers.” (50) “Don’t stop him,” Jesus replied. “Whoever is not against you is for you.”

A Samaritan Village Rejects Jesus

(51) Now as the time drew nearer for Jesus to be taken up to heaven, He braced

Himself and set out for Jerusalem. (52) Then He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went into a Samaritan village to arrange for Him to stay there. (53) But the people refused to welcome Him because He was heading for Jerusalem.

(54) When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, “Lord, do You want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?”^h (55) But Jesus turned and rebuked them, (56) and they went on to another village.ⁱ

Would-be Disciples

(57) While they were walking along the road, someone said to Him, “I will follow You wherever You go.” (58) At this, Jesus replied, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head.”

(59) Then He said to another man, “Follow Me!” “Sir,” the man replied, “let me go back and bury my father first.” (60) But Jesus responded, “Let the spiritually^j dead bury their own dead. Your duty is to proclaim the kingdom of God far and wide.”

(61) Still another man said, “I will follow You, Sir, but first let me say goodbye to my family.” (62) Jesus replied, “No one who puts his hand on a plow and keeps looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.”^k

^aSome manuscripts read *the twelve apostles*. ^b Some manuscripts omit *the sick*. ^c This was Herod Antipas. He was one of the sons of Herod the Great—the king who was ruling when Jesus was born. The term *tetrarch* indicates that he was the ruler over one of four districts in Palestine. ^d The Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. ^e The Greek term that has been translated *anyone/ human beings* in verses 25 and 44 is gender inclusive. ^f Some manuscripts read *This is My Son, Whom I love*. ^g Literally, “Put these words into your ears.” ^h Some manuscripts read *to destroy them like Elijah did?* ⁱ Some manuscripts read *But Jesus turned and rebuked them. “You don’t realize what kind of spirit you are exhibiting,” He said. (56) “The Son of Man didn’t come to destroy human lives, but to save them.” And with that, they went on to another village.* ^j Although the term *spiritually* does not appear in the original text, it is implied. ^k A farmer can only plow his field correctly if he looks straight ahead and devotes his attention to his work. And Christ’s disciples can only do good work for Him if they devote their full attention to His kingdom.

CHAPTER 10

Instructions for the 70

(1) Some time later, the Lord appointed 70^a other disciples and sent them out in pairs to go ahead of Him to every town and place He was planning to visit. (2) And He went on to tell them, “The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray that the Lord of the harvest will send out workers into His harvest fields.

(3) Now be on your way. But listen! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. (4) Do not carry a money bag, traveling bag, or sandals, and do not greet anyone on the way. (5) Whenever you enter a home, your first words should be, ‘Peace to this home!’ (6) And if a peaceful person lives there, your blessing will rest on him. Otherwise, your blessing will return to you. (7) Stay in that home, eating and drinking with the family. For a worker deserves his pay. Don’t keep moving around from home to home.

(8) When you enter a town and the people welcome you, be sure to eat the food that is set before you. (9) Continue healing the sick who are there and telling the people, ‘The kingdom of God has drawn near you!’ (10) But when you enter a town and the people do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, (11) ‘In protest against you, we are wiping off the dust from your town that clings to our feet. Nevertheless, you must realize this—the kingdom of God has drawn near you!’ (12) I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom on the day of judgment^b than for that town.

The Unbelieving Towns

(13) Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, while sitting in sackcloth and ashes. (14) Yes, indeed! It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you. (15) And you, Capernaum! Will you be lifted up to heaven? No, you will go down to the grave.

(16) Whoever listens to you listens to Me; whoever rejects you rejects Me. And whoever rejects Me rejects the One Who sent Me.”

The Return of the 70

(17) Then the 70 disciples returned with joy. “Lord,” they said, “even the demons keep submitting to us in Your name!” (18) At this, Jesus replied, “I was watching when Satan fell like lightning from heaven. (19) And I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions, and on all the power of the enemy. So nothing will ever hurt you! (20) But you shouldn’t rejoice because the spirits keep submitting to you. You should rejoice because your names have been written in heaven.”

Jesus Praises His Father

(21) Now at that time, Jesus was filled with joy by the Holy Spirit.^c “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth!” He exclaimed. “For You have hidden these things from wise and intelligent people, and have revealed them to babies! Yes, Father, for this was pleasing to You.

(22) Everything has been entrusted to Me by My Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son—and anyone to whom the Son desires to reveal Him.”

(23) When Jesus was alone with the disciples, He turned to them and said, “How blessed^d you are to see what you are seeing. (24) For I tell you that many prophets and kings longed to see what you are seeing, but they did not see it, and to hear what you are hearing, but they did not hear it.”

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

(25) On one occasion, an expert in the law stood up and tested Jesus.^e “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (26) “What is written in the law?” Jesus responded. “How do you read it?” (27) He answered, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind—and your neighbor as yourself.”^f

(28) “You have given the correct answer,” Jesus replied. “Continue doing this, and you will live.”

(29) But the expert in the law wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?” (30) With that, Jesus took up his question for further consideration: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when he was attacked by robbers. And after they stripped him and beat him up, they went away, leaving him half-dead.

(31) Now by coincidence, a priest was traveling down that same road, and when he saw the man lying there, he passed by on the other side. (32) Likewise, a Levite came on the scene, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side as well. (33) Then a Samaritan traveler came across the man, and as soon as the Samaritan saw him, he was filled with pity. (34) So he went over to the man and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own animal and brought him to an inn, where he took care of him. (35) And in the morning, the Samaritan took out two denarii^g and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and if you have to spend any more money, I will repay you when I return.’

(36) So of these three, who do you think was a neighbor to the man the robbers attacked?” (37) “The one who showed him mercy,” the expert in the law replied. Then Jesus said to him, “You must go and do the same thing.”

Martha and Mary

(38) As Jesus and His disciples were walking along, He entered a village where a woman named Martha welcomed Him. (39) Now she had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet, listening to His words. (40) Meanwhile, Martha was distracted as she prepared to serve the meal. So she came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, doesn't it matter to You that my sister has left me alone to do all the serving? Tell her to give me some help!"

(41) "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and stressed about many things, (42) but only one thing is needed.^h Mary has chosen what is best, and it will not be taken away from her."

^aSome manuscripts read 72—see also verse 17. ^b Literally, *on that day* ^c Some manuscripts read *by the Spirit*. ^dOr *happy* ^e It is uncertain whether the incident recorded here by Luke is the same as the one described in Matt. 22:34-40 and Mark 12:28-34. ^f Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18 ^g The denarius was a silver coin that was minted by the Romans. In the time of Christ, it was the usual daily wage for the average worker. ^h Some manuscripts read *but of a few things worth worrying about, only one is needed*.

CHAPTER 11

The Lord's Prayer

(1) Now Jesus was praying in a certain place. And after He finished His prayer, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." (2) So Jesus told them, "When you pray, say this:

'Father^a—may Your name be hallowed.

Let Your kingdom come.^b

(3) Continue giving us our daily bread each day.

(4) And forgive us our sins,

for we also keep forgiving everyone

who sins against us.

And do not bring us into temptation."^c

Effective Prayer

(5) Then Jesus said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, 'My friend, let me borrow three loaves of bread. (6) Another friend of mine, who is on a journey, has dropped by to see me, and I have nothing to offer him.' (7) And suppose your friend answers you from inside, 'Quit bothering me! The door has already been barred, and my children are in bed with

me. I can't get up and give you anything!' (8) I tell you, even if he won't get up and give you the bread because he is your friend, your persistence will force him to get up and give you what you need.

(9) So I tell you: Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you. (10) Everyone who keeps asking receives; those who keep seeking find, and to those who keep knocking, the door is opened.

(11) Is there a father among you who would hand his son a snake when he asks for fish,^d (12) or a scorpion when he asks for an egg? (13) So if you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father give the heavenly Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"^e

Jesus and Beelzebub

(14) Now Jesus was driving a demon out of a man who was mute. And after the demon left, the man began to speak, and the people were amazed. (15) Nevertheless, some of them said, "He keeps driving out demons by Beelzebub,^f the prince of demons." (16) And other people kept testing Him by demanding a miraculous sign from heaven.

(17) But Jesus realized what they were thinking, and He said to them, "Every kingdom that fights against itself is soon depopulated, and a family that fights against itself collapses. (18) So if Satan is fighting against himself, how can his kingdom last? I'm asking this question because you claim that I keep driving out demons by Beelzebub. (19) Furthermore, if I am driving out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your own disciples drive them out? Let them be your judges. (20) However, if I am driving out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has already come to you.

(21) When a strong man who is fully armed stands guard over his own palace, his possessions are secure. (22) But when someone stronger attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away all the armor the man relied on and divides up the plunder.^g (23) Anyone who is not with Me is against Me, and anyone who does not gather with Me is scattering.

The Return of the Evil Spirit

(24) Whenever an evil spirit comes out of a person,^h it keeps wandering through dry places, looking for rest and not finding any. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' (25) But when it arrives, it finds the house swept and put in order.ⁱ (26) At this, it goes and brings seven other spirits that are more evil than it is, and they all come into that house and settle down there. So that person's final condition is worse than the first."

Those Who Are Truly Blessed

(27) Now as Jesus was speaking, a woman in the crowd lifted up her voice and called out to Him, “How blessed^d is the womb that bore You, and how blessed are the breasts You sucked!” (28) But He replied, “On the contrary, how blessed are those who keep listening to God’s word and obeying it.”

The Sign of Jonah

(29) Then Jesus began to address the people who were swarming around Him. “This is an evil generation!” He exclaimed. “It keeps looking for a miraculous sign, but the only sign that will be given to it is the sign of Jonah.^k (30) For just as Jonah was a sign to the people of Ninevah, so the Son of Man will be a Sign to this generation.

(31) The queen of the south^l will rise up at the judgment with the men of this generation, and she will condemn them. For she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, but Someone^m greater than Solomon is here! (32) The men of Ninevah will rise up at the judgment with this generation, and they will condemn it. For they repented when Jonah preached to them, but Someone greater than Jonah is here!

A Shining Lamp

(33) No one lights a lamp and puts it in a cellar.ⁿ Instead, he puts it on a lampstand, so those who enter can see the light.

(34) Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are healthy, your whole body is radiant with light. But when your eyes are poor, your body is full of darkness. (35) So make sure that the light you have inside of you isn’t darkness. (36) If your whole body is radiant with light, and no part of it is dark, you will have as much light as when the rays of a lamp shine on you.”

Woe to the Religious Leaders

(37) Now as Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee invited Him home for lunch. So Jesus went in and reclined^o at the table. (38) But the Pharisee was surprised to see that He didn’t wash before the meal.^p (39) Then the Lord said to him, “You Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside, you are full of greed and wickedness. (40) You fools! Didn’t the Maker of the outside also make the inside? (41) So give what is inside to charity, and then everything will be clean for you.

(42) Woe to you Pharisees! You pay your tithe^q on mint and rue and every kind of herb, but you could care less about justice and love for God. It is these latter duties that you should have practiced, without neglecting the former ones.

(43) Woe to you Pharisees! You love the most prominent seats in the synagogues

and greetings in the marketplaces.

(44) Woe to you! You are like unmarked graves that people walk over without realizing it.”

(45) Then one of the experts in the law answered Him, “Teacher, when You say these things, You are insulting us as well.”

(46) “Woe to you also, you experts in the law!” Jesus replied. “You weigh people down with loads that are hard to carry, but you won’t lift a single finger to remove them.

(47) Woe to you! For you build up the tombs of the prophets, and yet your ancestors^r killed them. (48) So you testify that you approve of your ancestors’ deeds. They did the killing, and you do the building! (49) This is why God in His wisdom said, ‘I am sending them prophets and apostles. They will kill some of them and persecute others, (50) so that this generation will be held accountable for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world—(51) from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary.’ Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held accountable.

(52) Woe to you experts in the law! For you have taken away the key to knowledge. You refused to go into the kingdom of God yourselves, and when other people were going in, you hindered them.”

(53) Now after Jesus left that place, the scribes and the Pharisees began to harbor a bitter grudge against Him. And they questioned Him closely about many things, (54) for they were plotting to trap Him in His words.

^aSome manuscripts read *‘Our Father in heaven.* ^b Certain manuscripts and other ancient witnesses read *Let Your Holy Spirit come on us and cleanse us.* Other manuscripts read *Let Your kingdom come. Let Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.* ^c Some manuscripts read *And do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’* ^d Some manuscripts read *Is there a father among you who would hand his son a stone when he asks for bread, a snake when he asks for fish, .* ^e Some manuscripts read *how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!’* ^f The Greek literally reads *Beelzeboul* or *Beezeboul*—see also verses 18-19. ^g The strong man represents Satan, while the person who is even stronger represents Christ. ^h The Greek term that has been translated *person, person’s, or people* in verses 24, 26, 44, and 46 is gender inclusive. ⁱ Some manuscripts read *empty, swept, and put in order.* ^j Or *happy*—this applies to each use of *blessed* in verses 27-28. ^k See Matt. 12:40 for the meaning of the sign of Jonah. ^l The *queen of the south* was the queen of Sheba who visited Solomon. See 1 Kings 10:1-13 and 2 Chron. 9:1-12. ^m Or *Something*—see also verse 32. ⁿ Some manuscripts read *No one lights a lamp and puts it in a cellar or under a measuring basket.* ^o In the time of Jesus, people commonly reclined on couches as they ate. ^p The issue here is ritualistic, not sanitary. ^q A tithe is 10% of a person’s income. The Pharisees were so scrupulous that they paid every tenth leaf of their garden herbs as tithe. ^r Or *fathers*—see also verse 48.

CHAPTER 12

Instruction and Warnings

(1) Meanwhile, a crowd of many thousands had gathered together, and the people were trampling on one another. Now at first, Jesus began to speak to His disciples: “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees—I mean their hypocrisy.

(2) Everything that is concealed will be brought to light, and everything that is hidden will be made known. (3) So whatever you have said in the darkness will be heard in the light, and whatever you have whispered in the secret rooms will be proclaimed from the housetops.

(4) I tell you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who can kill your body, and after that can do no more. (5) But I will warn you of the One you should be afraid of. Be afraid of the One Who has the authority to throw you into hell after He has killed you. Believe Me, He is the One to fear!

(6) Aren’t five sparrows sold for two pennies?^a Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. (7) And even the very hairs of your head have all been numbered. So don’t be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows.

(8) I tell you, if anyone acknowledges Me before other people,^b the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God. (9) But anyone who denies Me before other people will be denied before the angels of God. (10) And if anyone speaks a word against the Son of Man, he will be forgiven. But anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

(11) When you are brought before synagogues and before rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourself or what you will say. (12) For the Holy Spirit will teach you the words you need at that time.”

The Parable of the Rich Fool

(13) Now someone in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, tell my brother to share the family inheritance with me.” (14) But Jesus replied, “Man, who made Me a judge or a divider of your property?” (15) And He said to the people, “Always be careful to guard yourselves against every form of greed, for even when a person has more than enough, his possessions cannot give him life.”

(16) Then He told them a parable, “There was a rich man whose land produced bountiful crops. (17) So he began thinking to himself, ‘What should I do? I have no place to store my harvest. (18) I know what I’ll do! I’ll tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and I’ll store all my grain and goods in them. (19) Then I’ll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. So take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!’”

(20) But God said to him, ‘You fool! Tonight, you are going to die! Then who will get all these things you have prepared for yourself?’ (21) So this is what will happen when anyone keeps storing up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

Worry

(22) Afterward, Jesus said to His disciples, “This is why I tell you not to worry about life and what you will eat, or about the body and what you will wear. (23) Life is more important than food, and the body is more important than clothing.

(24) Consider the ravens.^c They don’t sow or reap. They have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. But you are so much more valuable than birds! (25) How can worry add an hour to your life?^d (26) And if even such a small thing is beyond your control, why worry about other things?

(27) Consider the flowers and how they grow. They don’t struggle to spin yarn. But I tell you—even Solomon in all his splendor wasn’t clothed like one of these flowers. (28) So if this is the way God clothes the grass in the fields, which is alive today and thrown into an oven tomorrow, how much more will He clothe you, O people of little faith!

(29) Do not be concerned about what you will eat or drink, and do not be anxious, (30) for these are all the things the pagan world discusses. However, your Father knows that you have these needs. (31) But seek His kingdom, and these things will be provided for you as well. (32) Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom.

(33) Sell your possessions, and give to charity. Provide money bags that won’t wear out—an unfailling treasure in heaven, where no thief can get near it and no moth can destroy it. (34) For wherever your treasure is, there your heart will also be.

Be Ready for the Master’s Coming

(35) Keep your belts fastened and your lamps burning, (36) like people who are waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet,^e so that when he comes and knocks, they can open the door for him right away. (37) How blessed^f are those servants who are awake when their master arrives! Truly I tell you, he will put on an apron and have them recline^g at a table. Then he will come and serve them a meal. (38) Even if he comes in the middle of the night or toward morning^h and finds them prepared in this way, how blessed they will be!

(39) Remember—if the homeowner had known what time the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be burglarized.ⁱ (40) So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man is coming at a time you are not expecting Him.”

(41) Then Peter asked, “Lord, is this illustration for us or for everyone?” (42)

And the Lord replied, “Who is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master will put in charge of his household staff, to supply them with food rations at the proper time? (43) How blessed that servant will be when his master comes and finds him hard at work. (44) Truly I tell you, he will be put in charge of all his master’s property.

(45) But as for that servant who tells himself that his master is taking a long time to come, and who begins to beat the male and female servants and to party^j and get drunk—(46) his master will come on a day when he does not expect him and at a time when he is not ready. And the master will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

What God Expects of People

(47) The servant who knows his master’s will and refuses to get ready or do what his master wants will be beaten severely. (48) But the servant who unknowingly does things that deserve punishment will be beaten lightly. If someone has been given much, much will be required of him, and even more will be demanded from someone who has been given much on trust.

Jesus Will Bring Division

(49) I came to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it was already kindled! (50) But I have a baptism to undergo, and how stressed I am until it is completed!

(51) Do you think I came to bring peace on the earth? No, I tell you; I came to bring division! (52) From now on, five members of a family will be divided against each other—three against two and two against three. (53) They will be divided father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

Discerning the Present Time

(54) Then Jesus began to address the crowds as well: “When you see a cloud billowing up in the west, right away you say rain is coming, and it comes. (55) And when a south wind is blowing, you say it will be a scorcher, and it is. (56) You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky, so how is it that you can’t discern the meaning of this present time?”

Settle Matters with Your Opponent

(57) Why don’t you judge for yourselves what is right? (58) As you are going to the magistrate with your legal opponent, make an effort to settle matters with him on the way. If you don’t, your opponent may drag you off to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and the officer may throw you into prison. (59) I tell you, you won’t get out of there until you pay back the last copper coin.”^k

^aLiterally, *two assarions*—the assarion was worth approximately ½ cent. ^bThe Greek term that has been translated *people* in verses 8, 9, and 36 is gender inclusive. ^c Or *crows*. ^d Or *How can worry add a cubit to your height?* (One standard cubit equals approximately 18 inches.) ^e The Greek term that has been translated *wedding banquet* is plural, probably because the feasting lasted for several days. ^f Or *happy*—see also verse 43. ^g In the time of Jesus, people commonly reclined on couches as they ate. ^hLiterally, *in the second or third watch*—this is Roman terminology for the time between 9 P.M. and 3 A.M. ⁱ Some manuscripts read *he would have stayed awake and not allowed his house to be burglarized*. ^j Literally, *to eat and drink* ^k Literally, *until you pay back the last lepton*.” In the time of Jesus, the lepton was the smallest and least valuable coin in use.

CHAPTER 13

A Call to Repentance

(1) At that time, some people were present who told Jesus about the Galileans who had their blood mixed with their sacrifices by Pilate. (2) And Jesus responded, “Do you suppose that because these Galileans suffered in this way, they were more sinful than all other Galileans? (3) No, I tell you, but unless you repent, you will all perish just like they did. (4) Or those 18 people who were killed when the tower at Siloam fell on them—do you suppose they were more guilty than all the other people^a living in Jerusalem? (5) No, I tell you, but unless you repent, you will all perish in the same way.”

The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree

(6) Then Jesus went on to tell them this parable: “A man planted a fig tree in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but didn’t find any. (7) Finally, he said to the caretaker, ‘For three years now, I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. So cut it down! Why should it keep using up the nutrients in the soil?’

(8) ‘Sir,’ the caretaker replied, ‘leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and put manure on it. (9) Maybe it will bear fruit next year. If it doesn’t, then cut it down.’”

Jesus Heals a Crippled Woman

(10) Now Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath, (11) and a woman was there who had suffered from a spirit of weakness for 18 years. She was bent over and completely unable to stand up straight. (12) When Jesus saw her, He called her aside and said, “Dear woman, you have been set free from your

weakness.” (13) Then He put his hands on her, and instantly, she straightened up and began praising God.

(14) However, the synagogue leader became angry with Jesus for healing on the Sabbath, and he went on to tell the people, “There are six days to do work. So come for healing on those days, and not on the Sabbath.” (15) But the Lord answered him, “You hypocrites! Each of you releases his ox or donkey from the stall and leads it out to drink water on the Sabbath. (16) And shouldn’t this daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for 18 long years be freed from her bondage on the Sabbath?” (17) As He spoke these words, all His opponents were blushing with shame, but the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things He was doing.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

(18) “What is the kingdom of God like?” Jesus continued. “What can I compare it with? (19) It is like a mustard seed that a man planted in his garden. It grew into a tree, and the birds of the sky made nests in its branches.”

The Parable of the Yeast

(20) Again He asked, “What can I compare the kingdom of God with? (21) It is like yeast that a woman mixed into three measures^b of flour until it worked its way all through the dough.”

The Narrow Door

(22) Now Jesus continued His teaching journey through towns and villages as He made His way to Jerusalem. (23) Then someone asked Him, “Sir, are only a few people going to be saved?” He replied, (24) “Make every effort to go in through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will try to go in, but they won’t be able. (25) And after the Master of the household has gotten up and locked the door, you will stand outside and begin knocking and pleading, ‘Sir, open the door for us!’ ‘I don’t know where you came from,’ He will answer. (26) At this, you will say, ‘We ate and drank with You, and You taught in our streets.’ (27) But He will respond, ‘I don’t know where you came from. Get away from Me, all you wicked people!’^c

(28) Then there will be crying and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, while you are being driven out. (29) People will come from the east, west, north, and south,^d and recline^e at the feast in the kingdom of God. (30) In fact, some people who are now last will be first, while others who are first will be last.”

Jesus and Herod

(31) At that time, some Pharisees approached Jesus and said to Him, “Get away from here and be on Your way, for Herod wants to kill You.” (32) But He replied, “Go tell that fox, ‘Listen! I am driving out demons and healing the people today

and tomorrow, and on the third day, I will accomplish My goal.’ (33) In any case, I must be on My way today and tomorrow and the following day, because it simply won’t do for a prophet to perish outside Jerusalem.

Jesus Mourns Over Jerusalem

(34) O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You kill the prophets and stone those who have been sent to you. How often I have wanted to gather your children together, the way a bird gathers her young under her wings, but you wouldn’t let Me. (35) Look, your house will be abandoned.^f For I tell you that you will never see Me again until you say, ‘How blessed is the One Who is coming in the name of the Lord!’^g

^aThe Greek term that has been translated *people* is gender inclusive. ^bLiterally, *three sats* (about ½ bushel) ^cPs. 6:8 ^dPs. 107:3 ^eIn the time of Jesus, people who were attending a feast commonly reclined on couches as they ate. ^fSome manuscripts read *abandoned and left in ruins*. ^gPs. 118:26 (Septuagint)

CHAPTER 14

Healing on the Sabbath

(1) One Sabbath, Jesus went to eat a meal in the home of a leading Pharisee, and the other guests were watching Him closely. (2) Now since a man who had severe edema^a was right in front of Him, (3) Jesus asked the experts in the law and the Pharisees, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?” (4) But there was only silence. So Jesus took hold of the man, healed him, and sent him away.

(5) Then He said to them, “Suppose one of you has a son or an ox^b that falls into a well on the Sabbath day. Won’t you pull him out at once?” (6) And they couldn’t answer Him.

The Need for Humility

(7) Meanwhile, Jesus noticed how the guests were choosing the best places at the table for themselves, and He went on to share an illustration with them: (8) “When someone invites you to a wedding banquet,^c don’t lie down^d in the best place. It may be that your host has invited a guest who is more distinguished than you are. (9) Then your host will come to you and say, ‘Give this person your place.’ And in disgrace, you will have to take the least important place.

(10) But when you get an invitation, go lie down in the lowest place, and when your host comes along, he will say to you, ‘My friend, move up higher!’ Then you

will receive praise from your fellow guests. (11) For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the person who humbles himself will be exalted.”

(12) Now Jesus also began to speak to His host: “When you give a luncheon or a supper, don’t invite your friends, your brothers, your relatives, or your wealthy neighbors. If you do, they will only invite you back, and you will be repaid. (13) But when you give a dinner party, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. (14) Then you will be blessed.^e For even though they can’t repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

The Parable of the Great Supper

(15) When one of the guests who was reclining at the table with Jesus heard this, he remarked, “How blessed is the person who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!”

(16) At this, Jesus replied, “There was a man who was giving a great supper, and he invited many people. (17) Now at suppertime, he sent out his servant to tell the guests, ‘Come on! Everything is ready!’

(18) But one by one,^f they all started to make excuses. The first one said, ‘I just bought a field, and I have to go out and see it. Please excuse me.’ (19) Another said, ‘I just bought five pairs of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.’ (20) Still another said, ‘I just married a wife, and for that reason, I won’t be able to come either.’

(21) So the servant went back and reported all this to his master. Then the master of the household became angry and said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the city streets and lanes, and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.’ (22) ‘Sir,’ the servant replied, ‘your command has been carried out, and there is still more room.’

(23) With that, the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the country roads and lanes, and urge the people to come in, so my house will be full. (24) For I tell you, none of those men who were invited will taste my supper.’”

The Cost of Discipleship

(25) Now huge crowds were traveling with Jesus, and He turned to them and said, (26) “If anyone comes to Me without hating his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. (27) And whoever refuses to carry his cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple.

(28) Suppose someone wants to build a tower. Won’t he first sit down and estimate the cost to find out if he can finish it? (29) For if he lays the foundation, but cannot complete the project, everyone who sees it will begin to ridicule him. (30) ‘This fellow started building and couldn’t finish!’ they’ll laugh.

(31) Or suppose a king is going out to engage another king in battle. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he and his ten thousand men are able to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? (32) And if they can't, he will send ambassadors and ask for terms of peace while his opponent is still a long way off. (33) In the same way, you cannot be My disciple without saying goodbye to all your possessions.

(34) Salt is good. But if salt loses its taste, what can give it flavor again? (35) Since it isn't good for the soil or even the manure pile, people throw it out. Whoever has ears, let him hear!"

Edema (the retention of fluids in the tissues of the body) is often a symptom of congestive heart failure. ^b Some manuscripts read *a donkey or an ox*. Other manuscripts read *a donkey, a son, or an ox*. Still other manuscripts read *a sheep or an ox*. ^c The Greek term that has been translated *wedding banquet* is plural, probably because the feasting lasted for several days. ^d In the time of Jesus, people who were attending a feast commonly reclined on couches as they ate. See also verses 10 and 15. ^e Or *happy*—see also verse 15. ^f The meaning of the Greek is uncertain.

CHAPTER 15

Jesus Welcomes Sinners

(1) Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all crowding in on Jesus to listen to Him, (2) and the Pharisees and the scribes started grumbling. "This Fellow welcomes 'sinners' and eats with them!" they complained. (3) So Jesus told them these parables:

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

(4) "Suppose someone^a has 100 sheep, and he loses one of them. Won't he leave the 99 in the desert and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? (5) And as soon as he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders (6) and goes home to call his friends and neighbors together. 'Rejoice with me!' he cries. 'I found my lost sheep!' (7) And in the same way, I tell you, there will be greater joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous people who need no repentance.

The Parable of the Lost Coin

(8) Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins,^b and she loses one of them. Won't she light a lamp and continue sweeping the house and searching carefully until she finds it? (9) And as soon as she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together. 'Rejoice with me!' she cries, 'I found the silver coin I lost!' (10) And

in the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of God's angels over one sinner who repents."

The Parable of the Lost (Prodigal) Son

(11) Then Jesus continued, "There was a man who had two sons. (12) And the younger son said to his father, 'Father, give me my portion of your estate.'" So the father divided his estate between his sons.

(13) Not long afterward, the younger son converted everything he had into currency and set off for a distant country, where he squandered his inheritance on wild living. (14) Now after he had spent all his money, there was a severe famine throughout that country, and he began to come up short on funds. (15) So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. (16) And he would have gladly satisfied his hunger with the carob pods the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

(17) Finally, he came to his senses and said to himself, 'How many of my father's hired workers have plenty of food, and here I am starving to death! (18) I will set out and go tell my father, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. (19) I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me like one of your hired workers."'"

(20) So he set out and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and had pity on him. Then his father ran to meet him and threw his arms around his son's neck, as he kissed him tenderly. (21) 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you,' his son told him. 'I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'^d

(22) But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. (23) Then bring the fattened calf and slaughter it. Let's celebrate with a feast! (24) For this son of mine was dead, and he came back to life. He was lost, and now he's found.' So they began to celebrate.

(25) Meanwhile, the father's older son was in the field. And as he approached the house, he heard music and choral dancing. (26) So he called one of the servants and asked what this was all about. (27) 'Your brother has returned,' the servant told him, 'and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

(28) At this, the older son became angry and no longer wanted to go into the house. So his father came out and began pleading with him. (29) 'Look!' he said to his father, 'I've been slaving for you all these years, and I never once disobeyed a command of yours. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. (30) But this son of yours swallowed up your estate with prostitutes, and as soon as he came back, you slaughtered the fattened calf for him!'

(31) ‘My son,’ the father responded, ‘you have always been with me, and everything I have belongs to you. (32) But we had to celebrate and be glad because this brother of yours was dead, and he came to life. He was lost, and now he’s found.’”

^aThe Greek term that has been translated *someone* is gender inclusive. ^bLiterally, *ten drachmas*—the drachma and the denarius were approximately equal in value. The term *drachma* has also been rendered *silver coin* in verse 9. ^cIn the time of Jesus, a father could dispose of his estate by a will that was put into effect after his death or by a gift to his children during his lifetime. ^dSome manuscripts read ‘*I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me like one of your hired workers.*’

CHAPTER 16

The Parable of the Dishonest Manager

(1) Then Jesus spoke to the disciples: “There was a rich man whose business manager was accused of squandering his property. (2) So he called his manager in and asked him, ‘What is this I’m hearing about you? You need to give me a written account of your management, because you cannot be my business manager any longer.’

(3) At this, the manager said to himself, ‘What should I do? My master is relieving me of my position. I’m not strong enough to dig, and I’m ashamed to beg. (4) I know what I’ll do! This way, people will welcome me into their homes when I’m removed from my position.’

(5) So he called in each of his master’s debtors one by one. And he asked the first debtor, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ (6) ‘800 gallons^a of olive oil,’ the man replied. ‘Go get your bill,’ the manager told him. ‘Then sit down quickly and write 400 gallons^b on it.’

(7) Next, the manager asked another debtor, ‘How much do you owe?’ ‘A thousand bushels^c of wheat,’ he answered. ‘Go get your bill and write 800 bushels^d on it,’ the manager responded.

(8) Now the master had to applaud the dishonest manager for being so clever. For the people^e of this age are more clever than spiritual people^f in dealing with their own kind.

The Application of the Parable

(9) So I tell you, use worldly wealth to make friends for yourselves, and when it comes to an end, they will welcome you into your eternal home. (10) The person who is faithful with very little is faithful with much, and the person who is dishonest with very little is dishonest with much. (11) If you haven't been faithful in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with real wealth? (12) And if you haven't been faithful with what belongs to someone else, who will give you your own property?

(13) No household servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

(14) Now the Pharisees, who loved money, were listening to all this, and they started sneering at Jesus. (15) So He said to them, “You are the ones who are always trying to justify yourselves before the people,^g but God knows your hearts. For the things that are highly prized by human beings are an abomination in the sight of God.

Some Brief Teachings

(16) The law and the prophets were in effect until the time of John. But since then, the good news about the kingdom of God has been proclaimed, and everyone keeps forcing his way into it. (17) Nevertheless, it would be easier for the earth and the sky to disappear than for the smallest part of a letter^h to fall out of the law.

(18) Every man who divorces his wife and marries another woman is committing adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman is also committing adultery.

The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus

(19) There was a rich man who used to dress in purple and fine linen, and who lived in luxury every day, (20) and a beggar named Lazarus was laid at his gate. Now Lazarus was covered with sores, (21) and he was always longing to satisfy his hunger with the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. What is more, the dogs kept coming and licking his sores.

(22) Eventually, the beggar died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's Chest. Then the rich man also died and was buried. (23) And as he was being tormented in the world of the dead,ⁱ he looked up and saw Abraham in the distance, with Lazarus in his Chest. (24) ‘Father Abraham,’ he cried, ‘have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering in these flames.’

(25) At this, Abraham replied, ‘Remember, my son, that in your lifetime, you received what was good, while Lazarus received what was bad. But now, he is being comforted here, while you are suffering. (26) And besides, a great chasm has been set up between us, so that people who might want to cross from our side

to yours cannot do it, nor can they cross from your side to ours.’

(27) ‘Then I beg you, father,’ the rich man continued, ‘send Lazarus to my father’s house, (28) where I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so they won’t come to this place of torment also.’ (29) ‘They have Moses and the prophets,’ Abraham responded. ‘Let them listen to them.’

(30) ‘No, father Abraham!’ the rich man answered. ‘If someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ (31) But Abraham replied, ‘If they refuse to listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”

^aLiterally, ‘100 baths—a bath was approximately equal to eight gallons. ^bLiterally, 50 baths ^cLiterally, ‘100 cors—a cor was approximately equal to ten bushels. ^dLiterally, 80 cors ^eLiterally, sons ^fLiterally, the sons of the light ^gThe Greek term that has been translated *people/human beings* in verse 15 is gender inclusive. ^hLiterally, *one projection*—the term “projection” refers to a part of a letter. ⁱThe Greek word that has been translated *world of the dead* is not the usual term for hell. In most instances when it appears in the New Testament, this word is best rendered *grave*. However, the Greeks and some Jews also employed the word to denote a realm inhabited by departed spirits. Abraham’s Chest and Gehenna (the place of torment) were regarded as two compartments within this realm.

CHAPTER 17

Sin and Forgiveness

(1) Then Jesus said to His disciples, “Temptations are bound to come, but woe to the person through whom they come. (2) It would be better for him to be hurled into the sea with a millstone around his neck than to lead one of these little ones into sin. (3) So guard yourselves! If your brother does something wrong, rebuke him. And if he repents, forgive him. (4) Even if he wrongs you seven times a day and returns to apologize each time, you must forgive him.”

Faith and Duty

(5) Then the apostles said to the Lord, “Give us more faith!” (6) But He replied, “If you had faith as small as a mustard seed, you could say to the mulberry tree,^a ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.

(7) Suppose someone has a servant who has just come in from plowing the field or watching sheep. Will he say to his servant, ‘Hurry and lie down^b at the dinner

table?’ (8) No, he will tell his servant, ‘Get my supper ready and put on your apron, so you can wait on me while I have my meal. And afterward, you can have your supper.’

(9) He doesn’t thank the servant for following orders, does he? (10) And this is how it should also be with you. When you have done everything you were commanded to do, you should say, ‘We are worthless servants. We have only done our duty.’”

Ten Men with Leprosy^c

(11) While He was on His way to Jerusalem, Jesus was traveling along the border between Samaria and Galilee. (12) And as He was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met Him. They stood at a distance (13) and lifted up their voices; “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” they cried.

(14) Now as soon as He saw them, He said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And while they were on their way, they were cleansed. (15) But when one of them realized that he was healed, he came back, praising God with a loud voice. (16) Then he fell at Jesus’ feet and thanked Him—and this man was a Samaritan!

(17) “Weren’t ten men cleansed?” Jesus asked. “Where are the other nine? (18) Have none of them returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?” (19) Then He said to the man, “Get up and go; your faith has made you well.”

The Coming of the Kingdom

(20) On one occasion, the Pharisees asked Jesus when the kingdom of God would come. And He replied, “The kingdom of God is not coming with visible signs. (21) Nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘there it is.’ For the kingdom of God is among^d you!”

How Jesus Will Come

(22) Then Jesus said to the disciples, “The time will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. (23) And even though people will tell you, ‘There He is!’ or ‘Here He is!’ do not go chasing after them. (24) For in His day,^e the Son of Man will be like the lightning that flashes from one side of the sky and shines to the other. (25) But first, He must endure great suffering and be rejected by this generation.

(26) The time when the Son of Man comes will be like the days of Noah. (27) People were eating, drinking, and marrying up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. (28) It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. (29) But on the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from the sky and destroyed them all. (30) And this is exactly how it will be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed.

(31) On that day, if anyone is on a roof, he must not go down to get his belongings out of the house. And if anyone is in a field, he must not turn back for the things he left behind. (32) Always remember Lot's wife! (33) Whoever tries to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it.

(34) I tell you, on that night, two people will be in one bed. One will be swept away and the other left. (35) Two women will be grinding grain together. One will be swept away and the other left."^f (37) "Where Lord?" the disciples asked. And Jesus replied, "Wherever there is a dead body, there the vultures will also be gathered."

^aSome manuscripts read *this mulberry tree*. It is also possible that the sycamore fig tree is intended. ^bIn the time of Jesus, people commonly reclined as they ate. ^cThe term *leprosy* was probably used for several different skin diseases. ^dOr *within*. ^eSome manuscripts omit *in His day*. ^fSome manuscripts insert (36) *Two people will be in a field. One will be swept away and the other left.*"

CHAPTER 18

The Parable of the Unjust Judge

(1) Then Jesus told His disciples a parable to let them know that they should always pray and never give up: (2) "In a certain town, there was a judge who had no fear of God and no respect for people.^a (3) And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him to plead for legal protection from her enemy.

(4) Now for a while, the judge was unwilling to help her. But eventually, he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or respect people, (5) I will make sure this widow receives justice because she is such a nuisance to me. Otherwise, she could end up wearing me out with her coming.'"

(6) Then the Lord added, "Just listen to what that unjust judge had to say. (7) And won't God vindicate His chosen ones who keep crying out to Him day and night? Does He keep putting them off? (8) I tell you, He will vindicate them quickly! But when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector

(9) Jesus also told the following parable to some people who were sure they were righteous and who had contempt for everyone else: (10) "Two men went up to the temple to pray—one was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. (11) Now the Pharisee stood there and started praying to himself: 'God, I thank You that

I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. (12) I fast twice a week, and I pay tithe^b on all my income.’

(13) But the tax collector was standing at a distance, and he wouldn’t even look up to heaven. Instead, he was beating his chest^c and saying, ‘God, be merciful^d to me, the sinner!’

(14) I tell you, it was the tax collector who went home justified^e before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”

Jesus and the Children

(15) People were also bringing babies to Jesus, so He could touch them. And as soon as the disciples saw this, they began rebuking the people who brought them.

(16) But Jesus called the children to Him and said, “Let the little children come to Me, and stop hindering them. For the kingdom of God belongs to children like these. (17) Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it at all.”

The Rich Leader

(18) Then a Jewish leader posed a question for Jesus. “Good Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (19) Jesus answered him, “Why are you calling Me good? No one is good except God Himself. (20) You know the commandments: ‘You must not commit adultery;’ ‘You must not murder;’ ‘You must not steal;’ ‘You must not give false testimony;’ and ‘Honor your father and mother.’”^f

(21) “I have obeyed all these commandments ever since I was a boy,” the leader replied.

(22) When Jesus heard this, He said to him, “You are still lacking one thing. Sell everything you have and give the money to the poor—and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come back and follow Me.” (23) Now when the leader heard these words, he was heartbroken, for he was extremely rich. (24) As Jesus was watching the man,^g He commented, “How hard it is for wealthy people to enter God’s kingdom! (25) It is easier for a camel to squeeze through the eye of a sewing needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”

(26) At this, the people who were listening asked, “So who can be saved?” (27) “What is impossible with human beings is possible with God,” Jesus responded.

The Disciples’ Reward

(28) Then Peter spoke up. “Look,” he said, “we left our homes to follow You.” (29) Jesus replied, “Truly I tell you, no one who left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the kingdom of God (30) will fail to receive many times as

much in this age, and eternal life in the age to come.”

Jesus Predicts His Death Once Again

(31) Then Jesus took the twelve aside and said to them, “We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that was written by the prophets will find its fulfillment in the Son of Man. (32) He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and they will mock Him, insult Him, and spit on Him. (33) And after they have flogged Him, they will kill Him. But on the third day, He will rise again.”

(34) However, the disciples didn’t comprehend any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they had no idea what He was talking about.

Jesus Heals a Blind Man

(35) Now as Jesus was approaching Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. (36) And when he heard the crowd going by, he began to ask what was happening. (37) “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by,” the people told him. (38) So he cried out, “Jesus, Son of David!^b Have mercy on me!” (39) At this, the people who led the way started rebuking him and telling him to be quiet. But he shouted all the more, “Son of David! Have mercy on me!”

(40) Then Jesus stopped and gave orders for the blind man to be brought to Him. And as he came up, Jesus asked him, (41) “What do you want Me to do for you?” “Sir, I want to be able to see again,” the blind man replied. (42) So Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has healed you.” (43) And immediately, he regained his sight and began to follow Jesus as he praised God. Then all the people who saw this miracle praised God as well.

^aThe Greek term that has been translated *people/human beings* in verses 2, 4, 11, and 27 is gender inclusive. ^bA tithe is 10% of a person’s income. ^cPeople beat their chests as a sign of repentance and sorrow for sin. ^dThe Greek verb that has been translated *be merciful* has several nuances of meaning. These include showing mercy and forgiveness, atoning for sin, and turning away righteous anger against sin. ^eThe concept of *justification* is developed more fully in the Pauline epistles, especially in Romans and Galatians. The term has a forensic sense; it denotes being acquitted or declared righteous by a judge, Who in this case is God. ^fSee Ex. 20:12-16; Deut. 5:16-20. ^gSome manuscripts read *As Jesus noticed how sad the man was becoming*. ^hOr *Descendant of David!—the Son of David* is a Messianic title that refers to Jesus. See also verse 39.

CHAPTER 19

Jesus and Zacchaeus

(1) Jesus entered Jericho and was making His way through the city. (2) Now there was a wealthy man in town named Zacchaeus, who was a leading tax collector. (3) And he was eager to get a look at Jesus, but being a short man, he couldn't, because of all the people. (4) So he ran on ahead to the front of the crowd and climbed a sycamore fig tree^a to see Jesus, Who was about to pass that way.

(5) When Jesus reached the tree, He looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down! I need to stay at your house today." (6) So Zacchaeus came down as fast as He could and welcomed Jesus gladly.

(7) Then all the people who saw this began to grumble aloud. "He went in to be the guest of a 'sinner'!" they complained. (8) But Zacchaeus just stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! I'll give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have overcharged anyone, I'll pay back four times the amount."^b

(9) Then Jesus spoke about Zacchaeus: "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man is also a descendant^c of Abraham. (10) For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

The Parable of the Minas

(11) While the people were listening to these words, Jesus went on to tell them a parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and they thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately: (12) "A nobleman traveled to a distant country to be appointed king and then return. (13) But first, he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas.^d 'Invest these while I am gone,' he told them.

(14) Now even though his fellow citizens hated him and sent envoys after him to say, 'We don't want this man to reign over us,' (15) he returned as their king. Then he summoned the servants who had received the money, to find out how much they had earned by investing it.

(16) So the first servant came forward. 'Master,' he said, 'your mina has earned ten more minas.' (17) 'Well done, good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you were faithful with something very small, you will have authority over ten towns.'

(18) Then the second servant came forward. 'Master,' he said, 'your mina earned five more minas.' (19) 'You will have authority over five towns,' his master answered.

(20) Finally, the last^e servant came forward. 'Master,' he said, 'here is your mina. I kept it stored away in a cloth (21) because I was afraid of you. You are a harsh

man. You take what you didn't deposit and reap what you didn't plant.' (22) But his master answered him, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! So you know I'm a harsh man, taking what I didn't deposit and reaping what I didn't plant?' (23) Well then, why didn't you put my money in a bank, so that when I returned, I could have collected it with interest?'

(24) Then the master said to his attendants, 'Take the mina away from him, and give it to the man who has ten minas.' (25) 'Master!' they exclaimed, 'he already has ten minas!' (26) But the master replied, 'I tell you, those who have something will be given more. But those who have nothing will lose even the little they have. (27) Moreover, about those enemies of mine who didn't want me to reign over them—bring them here and slaughter them in front of me.'"

Palm Sunday—Jesus Enters Jerusalem in Triumph

(28) Now after Jesus had said this, He continued pressing onward as He made His way up to Jerusalem. (29) And as He approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples with the following instructions: (30) "Go into the village up ahead, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie him and bring him here. (31) And if anyone asks you why you are untying the colt, simply say, 'His Lord needs him.'"

(32) At this, the disciples went on their way and found the colt, just as Jesus had told them. (33) But while they were untying the animal, his owners asked them, "Why are you untying that colt?" (34) "Because his Lord needs him," they replied. (35) So they brought the colt to Jesus, and after they had thrown their robes over his back, they mounted Jesus on him.

(36) Now people were spreading out their robes on the road as Jesus was riding along. (37) And when He came near the slope of the Mount of Olives, the entire crowd of disciples began praising God joyfully and loudly for all the miracles they had seen:

(38) "How blessed is the One
Who comes as King
in the name of the Lord!^f
Peace in heaven
and glory in the highest!"

(39) At this, some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples!" (40) But He answered them, "I tell you, if these people keep quiet, the stones will cry out!"

Jesus Cries for Jerusalem

(41) As Jesus came closer and saw the city, He cried over it (42) and said, "If you only knew today what would lead to peace! But now it is hidden from your sight.

(43) For the time will come when your enemies will build a barricade around you with pointed stakes, and they will surround you and press against you on every side. (44) They will dash you to the ground—you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone on another, because you failed to recognize the time God visited you.”^g

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

(45) Then Jesus went into the temple and started driving out the people who were selling there.^h (46) “It is written,” He told them, “‘My house will be a house of prayer.’ⁱ But you have made it a ‘den of robbers.’”^j

(47) Now every day, Jesus was teaching in the temple, and the chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people were trying to get rid of Him. (48) But they couldn’t find any way to do it, because all the people were captivated by His words.

^aThe sycamore fig tree produces a fig-like fruit that is edible, and its wide branches fork in all directions, making it very easy to climb. Also, it cannot tolerate freezing weather and is well adapted to Jericho’s warm climate. ^b Or “*Look, Lord! I always give half of my income to the poor, and if I have overcharged anyone, I always pay back four times the amount.*” ^c Or *son* ^d The *mina* was a unit of money equal to 100 denarii. In the time of Christ, the average worker earned about three minas a year. ^e Literally, *the other* ^f Ps. 118:26 ^g Jesus’ prophecy was fulfilled at the conclusion of the Jewish-Roman War in A.D. 70, when the Roman army burned the temple and the city of Jerusalem. ^h Sacrificial animals were sold in the outer court of the temple. However, these animals could only be purchased with the special temple currency. Consequently, people had to exchange their secular currency for this special money in order to purchase these animals. This practice provided the moneychangers with an opportunity to enrich themselves by demanding an exorbitant exchange rate. ⁱ Isa. 56:7 ^j Jer. 7:11

CHAPTER 20

Jesus’ Authority Questioned

(1) One day, as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the good news, the chief priests,^a the scribes, and the elders confronted Him. (2) “Tell us,” they said, “by what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?” (3) “I will also ask you a question,” Jesus replied. “Tell Me about (4) John’s baptism—was it from heaven or from human beings?”^b

(5) So they debated this question among themselves—“If we say, ‘from heaven,’ He will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’ (6) But if we say, ‘from human

beings,' all the people will stone us to death. For they are convinced that John was a prophet."

(7) Finally, they answered, "We don't know where it came from." (8) And Jesus replied, "In that case, I will not tell you by what authority I am doing these things."

The Parable of the Wicked Farmers

(9) Then Jesus began to tell the people this parable: "There was a man who planted a vineyard, rented it out to some farmers, and went to a foreign country for a long time. (10) Now when the season for grapes came, he sent a servant to the farmers to collect his share of the vineyard's fruit. But the farmers beat the servant and sent him away empty-handed. (11) So the owner tried again and sent another servant, but they beat him as well. And after they had treated him shamefully, they sent him away with nothing. (12) Once again, the owner tried by sending a third servant, but they wounded him and threw him out too.

(13) Finally, the owner of the vineyard said, 'What should I do? I will send my son, whom I love. Most likely, they will respect him.' (14) But when the farmers saw the son, they started talking things over among themselves. 'This is the future owner,' they said. 'Let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!' (15) And with that, they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

So what will the owner of the vineyard do to them? (16) He will come and eradicate those farmers, and give the vineyard to others."

When the people heard these words, they exclaimed, "May this never happen!" (17) But Jesus gazed directly at them and asked, "Then what does this scripture mean:

'The Stone the builders rejected
turned out to be the main Cornerstone?'"

(18) Everyone who falls on that Stone will be broken to pieces, but if It falls on anyone, It will crush him into dust."^d

A Question about Paying Taxes

(19) Now the scribes and the chief priests looked for a way to get their hands on Jesus immediately, because they realized He had spoken this parable against them. But since they were afraid of the people, (20) they lay in wait and sent spies who pretended to be honest men. For they were hoping to trap Him in His words and hand Him over to the power and authority of the governor.

(21) Then the spies questioned Jesus. "Teacher," they said, "we know You speak and teach what is right. You show no favoritism, but teach the way of God in honesty. (22) Now is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

(23) But Jesus saw through their trickery and said to them, (24) “Show Me a denarius.^e Whose picture and title are on it?” “Caesar’s,” they replied. (25) “Well then,” He told them, “pay Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and God the things that are God’s.”

(26) So they were unable to trap Him publicly in anything He said, and they were so stunned by His answer that they drifted off into silence.

A Question about the Resurrection

(27) Then some Sadducees (who deny the resurrection) also came to Jesus with a question. (28) “Teacher,” they said, “Moses wrote that if a man’s brother dies and leaves a wife with no children, the man should marry the widow and produce descendants^f for his brother.^g (29) Well there were once seven brothers. The first one married a woman and died childless. (30) Then the second brother married the widow, (31) and so did the third, and eventually all seven married her and died without leaving any children. (32) Finally, the woman died as well. (33) Now at the resurrection, whose wife will she be, since all seven were married to her?”

(34) Jesus replied, “The people of this age marry. (35) But those who are counted worthy of participating in the coming age and in the resurrection from the dead do not marry. (36) Nor can they die anymore, for they are like the angels. And since they participate in the resurrection, they are God’s children.

(37) Even Moses revealed the truth that the dead are raised in the story about the burning bush. He called the Lord ‘the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’^h (38) God isn’t the God of the dead, but of the living. For all people are alive to Him.”ⁱ

(39) “Well said, Teacher!” some of the scribes responded. (40) And they no longer dared to ask Him any more questions.

A Question about the Christ

(41) Then Jesus asked them, “How can people claim that the Christ^j is David’s Descendant?^k (42) For in the book of Psalms, David himself said:

‘The Lord said to my Lord,
“Sit at My right hand,
(43) until I make Your enemies
a footstool for Your feet.”’^l

(44) Now David called Him Lord. So how can He be David’s Descendant?”

A Warning about the Scribes

(45) While all the people were listening, Jesus said to the disciples, (46) “Always be on your guard against the scribes. They like to parade around in long flowing

robes, and they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have the most prominent seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at formal dinners. (47) They devour the homes of widows and say long prayers to cover it up. So they will be punished more severely.”

^aSome manuscripts simply read *the priests*. ^bThe Greek term that has been translated *human beings* in verses 4 and 6 is gender inclusive. ^cPs. 118:22 (Septuagint) ^dThis may be an allusion to Dan. 2:34-35, 44-45. ^eThe denarius was a silver coin that was minted by the Romans. In the time of Christ, it was the usual daily wage for the average worker. ^fLiterally, *seed* ^gDeut. 25: 5-6 ^hEx. 3:6—the Sadducees accepted only the writings of Moses as inspired scripture. So Jesus met them on their own ground by pointing out that even Moses alluded to the resurrection. ⁱThis is probably an allusion 4 Macc. 7:19. The books of the Maccabees are part of the Apocrypha. ^jThe Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. ^kOr *Son?*—see also verse 44. ^lPs. 110:1

CHAPTER 21

The Widow's Coins

(1) Now Jesus looked up and saw the rich people dropping their gifts into the contribution box for the temple treasury. (2) Then He noticed a poor widow who dropped in two little copper coins.^a (3) “Truly I tell you,” He commented, “this poor widow put in more than all of them. (4) For all the others who gave their gifts had plenty, but she in her need put in all she had to live on.”

Jesus Predicts the Temple's Destruction

(5) Meanwhile, some of the people were talking about the temple and how it had been decorated with beautiful stones and with ornaments that were dedicated to God. But Jesus responded, (6) “In regard to what you are looking at, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; they will all be torn down.”^b

Signs of the End

(7) So they questioned Him, “When will this happen, Teacher? And what will be the sign that these things are about to take place?” (8) Jesus replied, “See to it that you are not deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am He!’^c and ‘The time is near!’ But do not follow them. (9) And when you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be terrified. These things are bound to happen first, but the end will not come at once.”

(10) Then Jesus went on to tell them, “Nation will rise against nation, and

kingdom against kingdom. (11) And there will be great earthquakes, famines, and epidemics in one place after another, along with fearful sights and great signs from heaven.

(12) But before all this happens, people will arrest you and persecute you. They will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of Me. (13) This will be your opportunity to witness to them. (14) Now make up your minds not to prepare your defense statements ahead of time. (15) For I will give you words of wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute.

(16) Even your parents, brothers, relatives, and friends will betray you, and they will have some of you put to death. (17) Everyone will hate you because of Me. (18) But not a hair of your heads will ever perish, (19) for you will gain life for yourselves by standing firm.

Jesus Predicts the Destruction of Jerusalem

(20) When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you should realize that its destruction is near. (21) Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains; those who are inside the city must leave it, and those who are out in the countryside must not enter the city. (22) For this will be its time of punishment, when everything that is written will be fulfilled.^d

(23) How awful it will be for pregnant women and nursing mothers in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and anger against the Jewish people.^e (24) They will fall by the sword and be taken away as captives to all the nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled down by the Gentiles, until their allotted time has been fulfilled.

The Second Coming of Christ

(25) There will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars. And on the earth, nations will be in dismay. They will be filled with anxiety at the roaring and surging of the sea. (26) People^f will faint with fear and foreboding as they consider what is coming on the world,^g for the cosmic powers will be shaken. (27) Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

The Timing of Christ's Coming

(28) Now when these things begin to happen, stand up straight with your heads high because your redemption is drawing near.” (29) Then Jesus shared an illustration with them: “Look at the fig tree and all the other trees. (30) When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves that summer is near. (31) And in the same way, when you see these signs taking place, you should know that the kingdom of God is near. (32) Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all the signs have taken place. (33) The earth and the sky will pass

away, but My words will never pass away!

(34) So always be on your guard! Don't let your minds be dulled by drunken hangovers and the worries of earthly existence, or that day will close on you suddenly (35) like a deadly trap. For it will burst with great force on all the people who live on the face of the earth. (36) Now stay alert at all times, and pray for strength to escape the calamities that are coming and to be able to stand before the Son of Man.”

(37) During the day, Jesus was teaching in the temple, but in the evening, He went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives. (38) And all the people kept coming to the temple early in the morning to listen to Him.

^aLiterally, *two leptons*—in the time of Jesus, the lepton was the smallest and least valuable coin in use. ^b Jesus' prophecy was fulfilled at the conclusion of the Jewish-Roman War in A.D. 70, when the Roman army burned the temple and the city of Jerusalem. ^c Literally, 'I am!' ^d See Dan. 9:24-27. According to Daniel's prophecy, the death of the Messiah would be followed by the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the temple. ^e Literally, *this people*. ^f The Greek term that has been translated *People* is gender inclusive. ^g The Greek term that has been translated *world* refers to the inhabited world.

CHAPTER 22

Judas Becomes an Enemy of Jesus

(1) Now the Festival of Unleavened Bread^a (also called the Passover) was approaching, (2) and the chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to eliminate Jesus, because they were afraid of the people.

(3) At this point, Satan entered Judas, the one called the man from Kerioth,^b who was numbered with the twelve. (4) Then he went to the chief priests and the temple guards to discuss his plan for handing Jesus over to them. (5) And they were delighted and agreed to pay him a sum of money. (6) So Judas closed the deal and began to watch for a good opportunity to betray Jesus to them without attracting a crowd.

The Passover

(7) Then the day of Unleavened Bread arrived, when the Passover lambs had to be sacrificed. (8) And Jesus sent Peter and John with these instructions: “Go, prepare the Passover Seder for us, so we can eat together.” (9) “Where do You want us to prepare it?” they asked. (10) And He replied, “As you enter the city, a

man carrying a jug of water will meet you. Follow him into the house he enters, (11) and give this message to the homeowner: ‘The Teacher asks you, “Where is the guest room, where I can eat the Passover with My disciples?”’ (12) He will show you a large upper room that has already been furnished. Get things ready there.” (13) So they went and found the room just as Jesus had told them, and they prepared the Seder.

(14) When the appointed hour arrived, Jesus took His place^c at the table with the apostles. (15) “I have greatly longed to eat this Passover with you before I suffer,” He said. (16) “For I tell you, I will never eat it again until it finds its fulfillment in the kingdom of God.”

The Lord’s Supper

(17) Now Jesus took a cup, and after He had given thanks, He said, “Take this and divide it up among you. (18) For I tell you, I will never drink the product of the vine again until the kingdom of God comes.”

(19) And He took bread, and after He had given thanks, He broke it. Then He gave it to them and said, “This is My body, which is being given on your behalf. Continue doing this in memory of Me.”

(20) Likewise, after supper, He took the cup and said, “This cup is the new covenant^d in My blood, which is being poured out on your behalf.^e”

Jesus Predicts His Betrayal

(21) Even now, My betrayer is with Me, and his hand is on the table. (22) The Son of Man is going to His appointed fate, but woe to the man who betrays Him!” (23) At this, the disciples started questioning one another as to who among them would do such a thing.

A Call to Servant Leadership

(24) An argument also developed among them as to who should be considered the greatest. (25) So Jesus said to them, “The Gentile kings dominate their people, and those who flaunt their authority are called the people’s benefactors.^f (26) But it must not be that way with you! Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who leads should be like the one who serves. (27) Who is greater—the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Isn’t it the one who reclines at the table? Yet I am among you as one who serves.

(28) You are the people who have always stood by Me in My trials. (29) And I am entrusting you with a kingdom, just as My Father entrusted Me with one. (30) In My kingdom, you will eat and drink at My table, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial

(31) Simon, Simon, Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat. (32) But I have prayed for you, Simon, so that your own faith will not totally fail. And when you have returned to Me, you must strengthen your brothers.”

(33) “Lord,” Simon answered, “I am ready to go to prison and to death with You!” (34) But Jesus replied, “Listen, Peter, the rooster will not crow tonight until you have denied three times that you know Me.”

Be Ready for the Crisis

(35) Then Jesus asked the disciples, “When I sent you on your way without a money bag, traveling bag, or sandals, were you in need of anything?” “Not a thing,” they answered. (36) “But now,” He continued, “whoever has a money bag must take it, and a traveling bag as well! And if you don’t have a sword, sell your robe and buy one! (37) For it is written, ‘He was numbered with the outlaws.’^g And I tell you, this scripture must be fulfilled in Me. In fact, everything that was written about Me is reaching its fulfillment.”

(38) At this, the disciples spoke up. “Look, Lord,” they said, “here are two swords.” “Enough of such talk!” He replied.

Jesus Prays on the Mount of Olives

(39) Now Jesus made His way as usual to the Mount of Olives, and His disciples followed Him. (40) When He reached the place, He said to them, “Keep praying that you won’t enter into temptation.” (41) And after He withdrew about a stone’s throw from them, He knelt down and began to pray: (42) “Father, if You are willing, take this cup of suffering away from Me. Yet not My will, but Yours be done.”

(43) Then an angel from heaven appeared to Him and gave Him strength. (44) And in His agony, He prayed more fervently, and His sweat was like clots of blood falling to the ground.^h

(45) Finally, He rose from prayer and went back to the disciples. But He found them sleeping, because they were worn out from sorrow. (46) “Why are you sleeping?” He asked. “Get up and pray, so you won’t enter into temptation.”

Jesus Is Arrested

(47) While Jesus was still speaking, a crowd arrived with the man named Judas (who was one of the twelve) leading them. Then he approached Jesus to kiss Him. (48) “Judas,” Jesus asked, “are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”

(49) Now the disciples saw what was going to happen, so they asked, “Lord, should we strike them with our swords?” (50) And one of them struck the servant

of the high priest and cut off his right ear. (51) But Jesus answered, “Let them arrest Me!”ⁱ And He touched the man’s ear and healed him.

(52) Then Jesus asked the chief priests, temple guards, and elders who had come to arrest Him, “Did you come out with swords and clubs because you took Me for a robber? (53) I was with you in the temple day after day, and you didn’t lay a hand on Me. But this is your hour—when darkness reigns.”

Peter Denies Jesus

(54) So they arrested Jesus and led Him away to the home of the high priest. And Peter was following them at a distance. (55) But after they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had taken their seats together, Peter went on to sit with them.

(56) Meanwhile, a servant girl saw him sitting there in the firelight, and she stared at him and commented, “This man was also with Him.” (57) But Peter denied it. “Girl, I don’t know Him,” he replied.

(58) A little later, someone else saw him and remarked, “You are one of them too.” “Man, I am not!” Peter answered.

(59) About an hour afterward, another person kept insisting, “This man was obviously with Him as well. In fact, he’s a Galilean.” (60) “Man, I don’t know what you’re talking about!” Peter responded. And all at once, a rooster crowed while he was still speaking.

(61) At that moment, the Lord turned and looked directly at him, and Peter remembered the Lord’s words—“Before the rooster crows tonight, you will deny Me three times.” (62) And he went outside and cried bitterly.

The Jewish Leaders Mock Jesus

(63) Then the men who were holding Jesus in custody started mocking Him and beating Him. (64) They blindfolded Him and demanded over and over, “Prophecy! Who punched You?” (65) And they spoke many other blasphemies against Him.

The Trial before the Sanhedrin

(66) Now when daylight came, the council of the people’s elders met together—both the chief priests and the scribes. Then they brought Jesus before their Sanhedrin^j (67) and said, “If You are the Christ,^k tell us.” “If I tell you, you will never believe Me,” Jesus replied. (68) “And if I ask you a question, you will never answer. (69) But from now on, the Son of Man will be sitting at the right hand of God’s power.”

(70) “So You are the Son of God then?” they all asked. “Yes, I am,” He told them, “although the words are yours.” (71) At this, they exclaimed, “Why do we need

any more testimony? We have heard it from His own lips!”

^aOr *Unfermentation*—see also verse 7. ^b *Kerioth* was a town in southern Judea. ^cLiterally, *reclined*—in the time of Jesus, people commonly reclined on couches as they ate. See also verse 27. ^d For the significance of the new covenant, see Jer. 31:31-34. ^e Some manuscripts omit, in whole or in part, the latter portion of verse 19 that follows the statement *This is My body*, and all of verse 20. ^f In their propaganda, oppressive rulers often referred to themselves as *benefactors*. ^g Isa. 53:12 ^h Some manuscripts omit verses 43-44. ⁱ The meaning of the Greek is uncertain. ^j The Great Sanhedrin (or Great Council) functioned as the highest Jewish court. ^k The Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*.

CHAPTER 23

The Trial before Pilate

(1) Then the whole assembly rose up and led Jesus off to Pilate. (2) And they opened their case against Him by saying, “We found this Man leading our nation into rebellion. He is constantly forbidding us to pay taxes to Caesar, and He keeps claiming to be a Christ^a King.”

(3) So Pilate asked Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?” “Yes, I am,” Jesus answered, “although the words are yours.” (4) At this, Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, “I find nothing criminal in this Man.” (5) But they insisted, “He keeps agitating the people all over Judea with His teaching. He started in Galilee and came all the way here.”

Pilate Sends Jesus to Herod^b

(6) When Pilate heard this, he asked if the Man was a Galilean. (7) And as soon as he learned that Jesus was from the region Herod ruled, he sent Him off to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.

(8) Now Herod was very glad to see Jesus. He had heard the reports about Him and had been wanting to see Him for a long time. In fact, he was hoping to watch Him perform some miracle. (9) So he tried to ask Him a large number of questions, but Jesus made no reply. (10) Meanwhile, the chief priests and the scribes had taken their stand and were vehemently pressing their charges against Him. (11) Then Herod and his soldiers treated Jesus with contempt. And after they had mocked Him, they sent Him back to Pilate dressed in bright clothing.

(12) On that very day, Herod and Pilate became friends, although they had previously been enemies.

Pilate Sentences Jesus to Death

(13) Then Pilate called the chief priests, the leaders, and the people together (14) and said to them, “You brought me this Man and accused Him of leading the people into rebellion. But I have examined Him in your presence and have found nothing criminal in Him that supports your charges. (15) And neither did Herod, for he sent Him back to us. Clearly, He has done nothing to deserve death. (16) So I will punish Him and let Him go.”^c (18) But they all cried out together, “Away with this Man! Release Barabbas for us.” (19) (Barabbas had been put in prison for rioting in the city and for murder.)

(20) However, Pilate appealed to the people again, because he wanted to release Jesus. (21) At this, they started screaming, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”

(22) For the third time, Pilate spoke to them: “What has this Man done wrong? I have found nothing criminal in Him that deserves death. So I will punish Him and let Him go.” (23) But they kept overwhelming Pilate with loud screams, demanding that Jesus be crucified. And their voices won out.

(24) Then Pilate gave his verdict that they could have their way. (25) He released the man they were requesting—the one who had been put in prison for rioting and murder. And he handed Jesus over to their will.

The Way to the Cross

(26) As the soldiers^d led Jesus away, they seized Simon, a man from Cyrene^e who was coming in from the fields, and they laid the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.

(27) Now a large number of people were following Him, including many women who were beating their chests^f and wailing at His fate. (28) So Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, don’t cry for Me. Cry for yourselves and your children. (29) For the time is coming when people will say, ‘How blessed are the women who couldn’t bear children—the wombs that never gave birth and the breasts that never nursed!’ (30) Then they will say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us!’^g (31) For if people are committing these acts when the trees are full of sap, what will happen when they are dry?”^h

The Crucifixion

(32) Now two other men who were both criminals were led out to be executed with Jesus. (33) And when they came to the place called The Skull,ⁱ they crucified Him along with the criminals—one on His right and the other on His left. (34) But Jesus kept repeating, “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.”^j

Meanwhile, the soldiers gambled for His clothes by casting lots,^k (35) while the people stood there watching. The leaders were sneering at Him and saying, “He

saved others, so let Him save Himself if He's the Christ God has chosen!" (36) The soldiers also mocked Him by coming up to Him and offering Him wine vinegar. (37) "If You're the King of the Jews, save Yourself!" they said. (38) And there was a written notice posted above Him^l that read:

"THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

A Criminal Believes in Jesus

(39) Now one of the criminals who was hanging there kept insulting^m Jesus. "Aren't You the Christ?" he taunted. "Then save Yourself and us!" (40) At this, the other criminal rebuked him and asked, "Don't you have any fear of God? You are under the same sentence as He is! (41) And our punishment is just, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this Man has done nothing wrong."

(42) Then he went on to say, "Jesus, remember me when You enter Your kingdom."ⁿ (43) And Jesus replied, "Truly I tell you today, you will be with Me in paradise."^o

The Death of Jesus

(44) By this time, it was about noon,^p and darkness came over the whole land^q until three o'clock.^r (45) For the sunlight failed, and the curtain in the sanctuary was ripped in two. (46) Then Jesus gave a loud cry and said, "Father, into Your hands, I commit My life."^s And with these words, He breathed His last.

(47) Now the centurion^t began praising God when he saw what had happened. "This Man really was the Righteous One!"^u he exclaimed. (48) And all the people who had gathered to witness the crucifixion also saw what had happened, and they beat their chests as they were returning home. (49) But everyone who knew Jesus (including the women who had accompanied Him from Galilee) stood at a distance and watched these events.

Jesus Is Buried

(50) Suddenly, a good and upright man named Joseph appeared on the scene. He was a member of the Sanhedrin^v (51) who had not voted for their course of action. And he came from the Jewish town of Arimathea^w and was waiting for the kingdom of God.

(52) This Joseph went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. (53) Then he took it down, and after he had wrapped it in a linen cloth, he laid it in a tomb that had been carved out of rock, where no one had ever been buried. (54) It was Preparation Day,^x and the Sabbath was approaching.

(55) Now the women who had accompanied Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how the body of Jesus was laid in it. (56) Then they returned home to prepare spices and perfume, but they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.^y

^aThe Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*—see also verses 35 and 39. ^bThis was Herod Antipas. He was one of the sons of Herod the Great—the king who was ruling when Jesus was born. ^cSome manuscripts insert (17) *Now during the festival, Pilate was expected to release one prisoner for the people.* ^dLiterally, *they*—see also verse 34. In both instances, soldiers are implied. ^e*Cyrene* was a Libyan city in North Africa. ^fPeople beat their chests as a sign of repentance and sorrow for sin—see also verse 48. ^gHos. 10:8 ^hThe innocent Jesus was abused and murdered at a time of great spiritual blessing, when God had come to visit His people. How much worse would be the fate of guilty Israel when the nation was fully ripe for God’s judgment and ready to be burned. ⁱTraditionally, *Calvary*—the term “Calvary” is derived from the Latin and means “Skull.” ^jSome manuscripts omit Jesus’ prayer for the forgiveness of His murderers. However, even if this prayer is not original with Luke, it could well have been a genuine petition from the lips of Christ that was passed down orally and later incorporated into Luke’s account. ^k*Lots* were small pebbles or sticks that were used in games of chance. ^lSome manuscripts insert in *Greek, Latin, and Aramaic letters.* ^mOr *kept blaspheming* ⁿSome manuscripts read *when You come in or with Your kingdom.* ^oOr “*Truly I tell you, today you will be with Me in paradise.*” The punctuation of verse 43 has often been a matter of controversy. Although New Testament Greek manuscripts are usually unpunctuated, the highly regarded manuscript known as Codex Vaticanus inserts what appears to be a pause mark (similar to a comma) after the word *today*. If this is a pause mark, the placement of a comma after *today* finds very ancient support. ^pLiterally, *the sixth hour*, ^qOr *earth* ^rLiterally, *the ninth hour.* ^sPs. 31:5 ^tA centurion was a commander of approximately 100 Roman soldiers. ^uOr “*This really was a righteous Man!*” *The Righteous One* is a Messianic title that refers to Jesus. ^vThe Great Sanhedrin (or Great Council) functioned as the highest Jewish court. ^w*Arimathea* is the Greek transliteration of *Ramah*. However, there were several towns in Palestine named Ramah, and it is uncertain which one is intended. ^x*Preparation Day* is the Jewish term for Friday, the day before the Sabbath. ^yEx. 20:8-11; Deut. 5:12-15

CHAPTER 24

Jesus Rises from the Dead

(1) At the earliest light of dawn on the first day of the week, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. (2) But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb’s entrance, (3) and when they went inside, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.^a

(4) While they were at a loss about this, two men suddenly appeared to them in clothing that flashed like lightning. (5) At this, the women were terrified, and they bowed down, with their faces to the ground. Then the men asked them, “Why

are you looking for the Living One among the dead? (6) He is not here; He has risen!^b Remember when He was in Galilee, how He told you (7) about the Son of Man—that He had to be handed over to sinful men and be crucified, and rise again on the third day?” (8) Then the women remembered what Jesus had said.

(9) So they returned from the tomb and reported the whole story to the eleven and all the others. (10) Those who were speaking with the apostles about this included Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary (the mother of James), and the rest of the women. (11) But the apostles refused to believe them, because their words seemed like nonsense. (12) Nevertheless, Peter got up and ran to the tomb. Then he bent down and saw only the linen grave clothes, and he went home wondering what had happened.^c

The Walk to Emmaus

(13) On the same day, two of the disciples were going to a village called Emmaus,^d which is about seven miles^e from Jerusalem. (14) And they were talking with one another about everything that had taken place. (15) Now as they were conversing and reflecting, Jesus Himself came up and started traveling with them, (16) but they were kept from recognizing Him.

(17) “What are you discussing as you walk along?” He asked them. At this, they stopped in their tracks and looked downcast.^f (18) Then one of them named Cleopas responded, “Are you only a stranger in Jerusalem? Don’t you know about the things that have happened there in the last few days?”

(19) “What kind of things?” Jesus asked. “About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a Prophet Who was powerful in word and action before God and all the people. (20) But our chief priests and leaders handed Him over to be condemned to death, and they crucified Him.

(21) Now we were hoping that He was the One Who would redeem Israel. What is more, this is the third day since it happened, (22) and some of our women astonished us. They were at the tomb early this morning (23) and didn’t find His body. Then they came and told us they had seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. (24) So some of our friends went to the tomb and found everything exactly as the women had said. But they did not see Him.”

(25) Then Jesus responded, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe everything the prophets have spoken! (26) Didn’t the Christ^g have to suffer all this and then enter His glory?” (27) And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He helped them understand the things that were said about Him in all the scriptures.

(28) Now as they approached the village where they were going, Jesus pretended to be traveling farther. (29) But they pleaded with Him, “Stay with us! It’s nearly evening, and the day is almost gone.” So He went in to stay with them. (30) And as He reclined^h at the table with them, He took bread and blessed it. Then He

broke it and started handing it out to them. (31) With that, their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him. But He vanished from their sight.

(32) “Weren’t our hearts glowing as He was talking with us on the road and explaining the scriptures to us?” they asked one another. (33) So they got up without delay and returned to Jerusalem, where they found the eleven and their companions gathered together (34) and saying, “It is really true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon!” (35) Then the two disciples went on to report what had happened on the road and how they had recognized Jesus when He broke the bread.

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

(36) While they were talking about this, Jesus Himself stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”ⁱ (37) But they were startled and terrified, and thought they were seeing a spirit. (38) “Why are you alarmed?” He asked them. “And why are doubts cropping up in your minds? (39) Look at My hands and My feet; it is I Myself! Touch Me and see! A spirit doesn’t have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” (40) And after He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.^j

(41) But they still could not believe it for joy and wonder, so He asked them, “Do you have any food here?” (42) At this, they handed Him a piece of broiled fish,^k (43) and He took it and ate it in their presence.

(44) Then He said to them, “While I was still with you, I told you that everything written about Me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms^l had to be fulfilled.” (45) And He opened their minds to understand the scriptures. (46) “This is what is written,” He told them: “The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, (47) and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (48) You will testify about this, (49) and I will send you the Gift My Father has promised. So stay in the city until you have been armed with power from on high.”

Jesus Ascends to Heaven

(50) Now after Jesus had led them out as far as Bethany, He lifted up His hands to bless them. (51) And while He was blessing them, He left them and was taken up into heaven.^m (52) Then they worshiped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.ⁿ (53) And they were constantly in the temple, praising God.^o

^aSome manuscripts omit *of the Lord Jesus*. ^b Some manuscripts omit *He is not here; He has risen!* ^c Some manuscripts omit verse 12. ^d The location of Emmaus is uncertain. ^eLiterally, *60 stadia*—one stadion equals 607 feet. Some manuscripts read *160 stadia* (about 18 miles). However, this alternate reading is precluded by the fact that travelers on foot could not traverse such a distance and return in one day. ^f Some manuscripts render verse 17 as follows: “*What are you discussing as you walk along and look downcast?*” *He asked them.* ^g The Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term,

Messiah, both mean *Anointed One*—see also verse 46. ^h In the time of Jesus, people commonly reclined on couches as they ate. ⁱ Some manuscripts omit *and said*, “*Peace be with you!*” ^j Some manuscripts omit verse 40. ^k Some manuscripts read *a piece of broiled fish, along with some honeycomb*. ^l *The law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms* is common Jewish terminology for the Old Testament. ^m Some manuscripts omit *and was taken up into heaven*. ⁿ Some manuscripts simply read *Then they returned to Jerusalem with great joy*. ^o Some manuscripts read *praising and blessing God. Amen*. Other manuscripts read *praising God. Amen*. Still other manuscripts read *praising and blessing God*.

STUDY GUIDE

- (1) What was the mission of John the Baptist? (*Mal. 4:5-6; Luke 1:16-17, 76-79*)
- (2) Why do you think God chose the angel Gabriel to inform Mary that she would be the mother of the Messiah? Gabriel had provided the prophet Daniel with information about the coming of the Messiah centuries before. Could this be one reason Gabriel was chosen to announce the Messiah’s birth? (*Dan. 9:20-27; Luke 1:26-38*)
- (3) Why do you think the angels chose to reveal Christ’s birth to the shepherds instead of the religious leaders up the road in Jerusalem? (*Luke 2:8-20*)
- (4) What did Simeon mean when he told Mary that a sword would pierce her own life? (*Luke 2:35*)
- (5) Why do you think Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem when He was twelve years old? Was He being disobedient to His earthly parents? (*Luke 2:41-51*)
- (6) Both Matthew and Luke provide us with Jesus’ family history. Compare the two genealogies. What differences do you see? How do you account for these differences? (*Matt. 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38*)
- (7) What did Jesus mean when He called Himself the Lord of the Sabbath? (*Luke 6:5*)
- (8) Why did Jesus choose to heal people on the Sabbath? Why were Jesus’ enemies so opposed to this practice? (*Luke 6:6-11*)
- (9) Was the sinful woman who anointed Jesus in Simon’s house Mary of Bethany? Was she Mary Magdalene? Were Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene the same person? (*Matt. 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; Luke 7:36-50, 8:1-3; John 12:1-8*)

- (10) Compare Luke's account of the healing of the demon-possessed man with the parallel accounts in Matthew and Mark. What differences do you see? How can these differences be explained? (*Matt. 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39*)
- (11) According to Jesus, who is our neighbor? What does the Parable of the Good Samaritan teach us about being a good neighbor to others? (*Luke 10:25-37*)
- (12) What does the Lord's Prayer teach us about prayer in general? (*Luke 11:1-4*)
- (13) Is God like the lazy man who didn't want to get out of bed and help his friend? What is Jesus telling us about effective prayer? (*Luke 11:5-13*)
- (14) Why did Jesus speak so harshly to the Pharisee who invited Him home for lunch? (*Luke 11:37-54*)
- (15) If Jesus is the Prince of Peace, why does He bring division? (*Luke 12:51-53*)
- (16) What is the meaning of the Parable of the Barren Fig Tree? (*Luke 13:6-9*)
- (17) How is God's kingdom like mustard seed and yeast? (*Luke 13:18-21*)
- (18) What lesson is Jesus teaching us in the Parable of the Dishonest Manager? Is Jesus commending the manager for his dishonesty? (*Luke 16:1-15*)
- (19) What lesson is Jesus teaching us in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus? What do the terms "Abraham's Chest" and "world of the dead" actually mean? Should we regard this parable as a literal description of life after death? (*Luke 16:19-31*)
- (20) What did Jesus mean when He said that "the kingdom of God is among you?" (*Luke 17:20-21*)
- (21) What does it mean to be justified? How can we be justified before God? (*Luke 18:9-14; Rom. 3:19-24*)
- (22) What lesson is Jesus teaching us in the Parable of the Minas? (*Luke 19:11-27*)
- (23) How can Christ be both David's Descendant and David's Lord? (*Luke 20:41-44*)
- (24) What do the end-time signs tell us about Jesus' second coming? Wars, famines, earthquakes, persecutions, etc., have occurred throughout human history, so how can they be signs of His return? Should we expect the intensity of these signs to increase as Jesus' return draws nearer? (*Luke 21*)
- (25) Do you think Jesus' body and blood are physically present in the Lord's

Supper, or is Jesus using metaphorical language? (*Luke 22:19-20*)

(26) How could Jesus promise eternal life to a criminal? Did this criminal have any good deeds to offer God? (*Luke 23:39-43; Eph. 2:8-9; 1 John 5:11-13*)

(27) Why do you think Jesus wanted His disciples to know that He had a body of flesh and bone when He appeared to them after His resurrection? Does it really matter whether He was raised as a spirit or with a physical body? Why do Christians put so much emphasis on the bodily resurrection of Jesus? (*Luke 24:36-43*)

John

CHAPTER 1

The Word Becomes Flesh

(1) In the beginning was the Word,^a
and the Word was in communion with God,
and the Word was God.

(2) This is the One
Who was in communion with God
at the beginning.

(3) Everything came into being through the Word,
and without Him,
nothing that exists came into being.

(4) In Him was Life,
and that Life was humanity's^b Light.

(5) The Light keeps shining in the darkness,
and the darkness has not absorbed^c It.

(6) There was a man named John who was sent from God. (7) He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that through his testimony, everyone could believe. (8) He was not the Light, but he came to bear witness to the Light. (9) For the real Light that enlightens every person was coming into the world.^d

(10) He was in the world,
and the world owed its existence to Him.
But the world did not recognize Him.

(11) He came to His own country,
and His own people did not receive Him.

(12) But to all who did receive Him—
to those who believed in His name—
He gave the right to become children of God.

(13) God's children are not born from genetic lines,^e nor as a result of physical passion or a man's desire. They are born of God.

(14) So the Word became flesh
and pitched His tent^f among us.
And we have seen His glory—
the glory He had
as the Father's one and only Son,
full of grace and truth.

(15) John testified about Him and cried out, “This is the Man I was talking about when I said, ‘The One Who is coming after me has surpassed me, because He existed before me.’” (16) Out of the fullness of His bounty, we have all received one gracious blessing after another. (17) For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.^g (18) No one has ever seen God, but the one and only God,^h Who is close to the Father’s heart, has explained Him to us.

John Clarifies His Mission

(19) Now John gave this testimony when the Jewsⁱ sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him who he was. (20) He confessed with complete candor, “I am not the Christ!” (21) “Well then, are you Elijah?” they asked him. “No, I’m not,” he replied. “Are you the Prophet?”^j “No,” he answered. (22) “Then who are you?” they asked. “We need to give an answer to the people who sent us. What do you have to say about yourself?” (23) At this, John responded with the words of the prophet Isaiah:

“I am a voice crying in the desert,
‘Make the way straight for the Lord!’”^k

(24) Then the Pharisees in the group (25) asked him, “If you are not the Christ, or Elijah, or the Prophet, why are you baptizing?” (26) “I am baptizing with^l water,” John answered them. “But Someone you don’t know has already taken His stand among you. (27) He is the One Who is coming after me, and I am unworthy to loosen His sandal strap.”

(28) This all happened at Bethany,^m on the other side of the Jordan River, where John was baptizing.

The Lamb of God

(29) The next day, as John saw Jesus coming toward him, he exclaimed, “Look, the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world! (30) This is the One I was talking about when I said, ‘A Man Who is coming after me has surpassed me, because He existed before me.’ (31) Even I didn’t know Who He was, but I came baptizing with water so that He could be revealed to Israel.”

(32) Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven like a dove and remain on Him.ⁿ (33) I didn’t know Who He was, but the One Who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘When you see the Spirit come down and remain on a Man, He will be the One Who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ (34) I have seen it happen and have testified that He is the Son of God.”^o

(35) On the following day, John was standing there again with two of his disciples (36) as Jesus was walking by. And he gazed at Jesus and exclaimed, “Look! The Lamb of God!”

Jesus' First Disciples

(37) Now after the two disciples heard John say this, they followed Jesus. (38) Then Jesus turned around and noticed them following Him. “What are you looking for?” He asked them. “Rabbi,” they responded, “where are You staying?” (“Rabbi” means “Teacher.”) (39) “Come and see!” Jesus told them. So they went and saw where He was staying, and since it was about four o’clock in the afternoon,^p they spent the rest of the day with Him.

(40) Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who had heard John’s words and had followed Jesus. (41) So before anything else, Andrew found his own brother Simon and told him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means “the Christ”). (42) Then he led Simon to Jesus, Who looked intently at him and said, “You are Simon, the son of John. But you will be called Cephas” (which is translated “Peter”).^q

Philip and Nathanael Join Jesus

(43) The next day, Jesus wanted to leave for Galilee, so He found Philip and said to him, “Follow Me!” (44) (Philip was from Bethsaida, the hometown of Andrew and Peter.)

(45) Now Philip found Nathanael^r and told him, “We have found the One Who is described in the law of Moses and the prophets. He is Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph.” (46) “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” Nathanael asked. “Come and see!” Philip answered.

(47) When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching Him, He spoke up. “Look!” He said, “a true Israeli! There is nothing false in him!” (48) “How do You know me?” Nathanael asked. “I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you,” Jesus replied. (49) “Rabbi!” Nathanael exclaimed, “You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”^s

(50) But Jesus responded, “Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than that.” (51) And He added, “Most truly I tell you, all of you will see heaven standing open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”^t

^pThe Greek term that has been translated *Word* is rich in meaning. Among the Greek philosophers, the *Word* was equated with the creative energy that brought the universe into being. And in Gen. 1, God is portrayed as creating the heavens and the earth by His powerful *word*. Throughout the Old Testament, God accomplishes His will by means of His word. When the *word of the LORD* came to the ancient prophets, God gave them His promise of a coming Messiah—an anointed King Who would save His people. John’s startling message is that God’s *word*—His ancient promise—has been fulfilled. That promise has now taken on fleshly form in Jesus. Jesus is God’s *YES* to the Jewish people and to all of humanity. What is more, Jesus is identified as the creative Agent Who brought the universe into being at

the beginning. From eternity, He has lived in the closest fellowship with His Father. And like the Father, He is almighty God. Thus John 1:1 points toward the concept of the Holy Trinity. ^b The Greek term that has been translated *humanity's/person* in verses 4 and 9 is gender inclusive. ^c The Greek term that has been rendered *absorbed* is a difficult one to translate. The term denotes two distinct ideas—overcoming and understanding. The English translation *absorbed* is an attempt to capture both of these ideas in a single word. ^d Or *This was the real Light that enlightens every person who comes into the world.* ^e Literally, *bloods*. ^f At the time of the Exodus, the people of Israel were instructed to build a portable tent sanctuary or tabernacle that could be carried with them from place to place. Within the Most Holy Place (the inner room of this tabernacle), God's glorious presence, known as the *Shekinah*, was manifested. Likewise, when God took on human flesh in Jesus, the divine presence, though veiled by humanity, was manifested among His people. Thus John is likening God's incarnation in Jesus Christ to His manifestation in the tabernacle. ^g The idea in verses 16-17 seems to be that the Old Covenant, which was centered in the law of Moses, has now been replaced by the New Covenant, which is centered in Jesus' grace. Also, the Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. See also verses 20, 25, and 41. ^h Some manuscripts read *the one and only Son*. However, the older and better manuscripts read *the one and only God*, and so affirm Jesus' full Deity. ⁱ John frequently uses the expression, *the Jews*, to designate a distinct group of people, and this expression often has negative overtones. However, John can hardly be referring to all Jews, since he himself was a Jew. In his Gospel, *the Jews* are primarily the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem who rejected the message of Jesus. ^j Moses had foretold the rise of another Prophet Who would speak for God with great authority. See Deut. 18:15-19. In Acts 3:22-23, Peter applies this prophecy to Jesus. ^k Isa. 40:3 ^l Or *in*—this applies to each use of *with* in verses 26, 31, and 33. ^m This was not the town of Bethany near Jerusalem, but an unknown site in Transjordan. Although some manuscripts read *Bethabara* or *Betharaba*, the best manuscripts read *Bethany*. ⁿ See Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:10, and Luke 3:21-22. ^o Some manuscripts read *He is God's chosen One.* ^p Literally, *about the tenth hour*. ^q *Cephas* (Aramaic) and *Peter* (Greek) both mean *rock*. ^r In the Synoptic Gospels, this disciple seems to be known as *Bartholomew*. However, *Bartholomew* is simply a title, meaning *son of Talmai*. His actual name was probably Nathanael. ^s It is unclear why Jesus' simple statement that He had seen Nathanael under the fig tree provoked such a bold confession of faith. Probably Nathanael sensed a supernatural insight in Jesus' statement. ^t See Gen. 28:12. Jesus is applying the imagery in Jacob's dream to Himself.

CHAPTER 2

Jesus Changes Water into Wine

(1) On the third day,^a there was a wedding banquet at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, (2) and Jesus and His disciples were also invited to the festivities. (3) But when the wine gave out, His mother said to Him, "They have no more wine." (4) "Dear woman, that's none of My business," Jesus replied. "My time has not come yet." (5) Nevertheless, His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever He tells you."

(6) Now there were six stone water jugs lying nearby. They were the kind used by the Jews for their purification rites, and each of them held between 15 and 30 gallons.^b (7) So Jesus told the servants to fill the jugs with water, and they filled them to the brim. (8) Then He told them to draw some out and take it to the director of the banquet. And the servants did as they were told.

(9) When the director tasted the water that had become wine (without realizing where it had come from, although the servants who had drawn the water knew), he called the groom aside (10) and commented, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the poorer stuff when the guests are drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now!"

(11) This feat which Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee marked the beginning of His miraculous signs. So He revealed His glory, and His disciples believed in Him. (12) Afterward, He went down to Capernaum, along with his mother and brothers, and His disciples, and they stayed there a few days.

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

(13) Now since the Jewish Passover was near, Jesus went up to Jerusalem, (14) where He found people in the temple who were selling oxen, sheep, and doves, as well as moneychangers who were sitting around.^c (15) So He made a kind of whip out of twisted reeds and drove them all out of the temple, including the sheep and the oxen. And He scattered the coins of the moneychangers as He overturned their tables. (16) "Get these things out of here!" He told the people who were selling doves. "Stop turning My Father's house into a trading market!" (17) Then His disciples remembered the place in the scriptures where it is written, "Zeal for Your house will consume Me."^d

(18) Meanwhile, the Jews spoke up and asked Him, "What miraculous sign are You going to show us to justify Your actions?" (19) Jesus replied, "Destroy this sanctuary, and I will raise it up in three days!" (20) "It has taken 46 years to build this sanctuary," the Jews objected, "and You're going to do it in three days?" (21) However, the sanctuary Jesus was talking about was His own body. (22) And

after He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He used to say this, and they believed the scripture and the message Jesus had spoken.

Jesus' Knowledge of Human Nature

(23) While Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the miraculous signs He was performing and believed in His name. (24) But Jesus would not entrust Himself to them, because He knew what everyone was like. (25) He didn't need anyone to testify about human^e nature, for He knew what was in the human heart.

^aIt seems that chapters 1 and 2 describe events that occurred in a sequence of days within a single week. If this is the case, *the third day* in John 2:1 probably refers to the period of time that had passed since the call of Philip and Nathanael. See John 1:43-51. ^b Literally, *two or three measures*—a measure was approximately equal to eight or nine gallons. ^c Sacrificial animals were sold in the outer court of the temple. However, these animals could only be purchased with the special temple currency. Consequently, people had to exchange their secular currency for this special money in order to purchase these animals. This practice provided the moneychangers with an opportunity to enrich themselves by demanding an exorbitant exchange rate. ^d Ps. 69:9 ^e The Greek term that has been translated *human* two times in verse 25 is gender inclusive.

CHAPTER 3

Nicodemus and the New Birth

(1) There was a man named Nicodemus who was a Pharisee and a leader of the Jews.^a (2) And he came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know You are a Teacher Who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs You are doing if God were not with him.”

(3) But Jesus answered him, “Most truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he has been reborn from above.”^b (4) “How can a person^c be born when he is old?” Nicodemus asked. “Can he really enter his mother’s womb a second time and be born?”

(5) At this, Jesus replied, “Most truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he has been born of water and Spirit. (6) The flesh gives birth to what is physical, but the Spirit gives birth to what is spiritual. (7) You should not be surprised that I told you, ‘You must all be reborn from above.’ (8) The wind blows wherever it desires, and even though you hear its sound, you don’t know where it

is coming from or where it is going. And that's the way it is with everyone who has been born of the Spirit."

God's Free Gift of Salvation

(9) "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked. (10) "You are Israel's teacher, and you can't understand this?" Jesus responded. (11) "Most truly I tell you, We know what We are talking about, and We testify to what We have seen. But you people do not accept Our testimony.^d (12) If I have told you about earthly things, and you don't believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?"

(13) No one has gone up into heaven except the One Who came down from heaven—the Son of Man.^e (14) And just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert,^f in the same way, the Son of Man must be lifted up, (15) so that everyone who believes in Him can have eternal life. (16) For this is the way God loved the world—He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.

(17) God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. (18) The person who believes in Him is not condemned, but the person who refuses to believe has already been condemned because He has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. (19) This is how the judgment works! For the Light has come into the world, but the people loved the darkness instead of the Light because their deeds were evil. (20) Everyone who does evil hates the Light and refuses to come to the Light because he doesn't want his deeds to be exposed. (21) But the person who practices the truth comes to the Light to make it clear that his deeds have been accomplished through God."^g

John Points His Disciples to Jesus

(22) After this, Jesus and His disciples went into the region of Judea, where He spent some time with them and baptized people. (23) Now John was also baptizing at Aenon, near Salim,^h because there was plenty of water there, and people kept arriving for baptism. (24) (This was before John was thrown into prison.ⁱ)

(25) Then John's disciples started arguing with a Jew^j about ceremonial purification.^k (26) And they went to John and told him, "Look, Rabbi, that Man Who was with you on the other side of the Jordan River—the One you testified about—He's baptizing, and everyone is going to Him."

(27) At this, John replied, "A person can only receive what God has given him. (28) You yourselves are witnesses that I said, 'I am not the Christ,^l but I have been sent as His forerunner.' (29) The bride belongs to the Groom. But the Groom's friend has been waiting and listening for Him, and he is thrilled to hear the Groom's voice. That thrill is mine, and it is complete. (30) He must increase, while I must decrease!"^m

The One Who Comes from Heaven

(31) The One Who comes from above is superior to everything. The one who is from the earth is earthly, and he talks about earthly things. The One Who comes from heaven (32) testifies to what He has seen and heard.ⁿ Yet no one accepts His testimony. (33) But if anyone does accept it, he has placed his seal on God's truthfulness.

(34) For the One Who was sent by God speaks God's own words, because God gives Him the Spirit without limit. (35) The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in His power. (36) Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will never see life. For God's holy anger remains on him.

^aThe fact that Nicodemus was a leader of the Jews indicates that he was a member of the Sanhedrin. ^b The Greek terminology that is used here denotes both rebirth and being born from above. The English translation *reborn from above* is an attempt to capture both of these ideas. ^c The Greek term that has been translated *person/people* in verses 4, 19, and 27 is gender inclusive. ^d The use of the plural pronouns in this verse is strange. Perhaps Jesus is associating Himself with His Father or with His disciples. ^e Some manuscripts read *the Son of Man Who is in heaven*. ^f See Num. 21:4-9. ^g Some expositors would end the quotation after verse 12 or verse 15. ^h This location is still uncertain, although a number of sites have been proposed. ⁱ See Matt. 14:3-5 and Mark 6:17-20. ^j Some manuscripts read *with Jews*. ^k This statement is obscure because it is so brief. The Jews of the first century practiced several different kinds of ceremonial washing. John's baptism and Jesus' baptism were two of these. ^lThe Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. ^mSome expositors would end the quotation after verse 36. ⁿ Some manuscripts read *The One Who comes from heaven is superior to everything. (32) He testifies to what He has seen and heard*.

CHAPTER 4

Jesus and the Woman of Sychar

(1) Now Jesus^a realized that the Pharisees had heard that He was winning and baptizing more disciples than John, (2) although Jesus Himself wasn't baptizing them; only His disciples were. (3) So He left Judea and made His way back to Galilee again. (4) But He had to travel through Samaria on the way.

(5) Eventually, He came to a Samaritan town named Sychar, which was near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.^b (6) Jacob's well was there, and Jesus was so tired from the journey that He sat down by the well. (It was about noon.^c)

(7) Now when a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Please give Me a drink.” (8) (Jesus’ disciples had gone into town to buy food.) (9) But the woman replied, “Why would a Jew like You ask a Samaritan woman like me for a drink?” (For Jews refuse to use the same eating utensils that Samaritans use.)^d

(10) Jesus answered her, “If you knew about God’s free gift and Who the Person is Who is asking you for a drink, you would have made a request to Him, and He would have given you living water.”^e (11) “Sir,” she said, “You have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where would You get this living water? (12) Are You greater than our ancestor^f Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, along with his sons and his flocks?”

(13) “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again,” Jesus responded. (14) “But whoever drinks the water I will give him will never be thirsty. In fact, the water I will give him will become a spring inside of him that gushes up into eternal life.” (15) “Sir,” the woman answered Him, “Give me this water! Then I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

(16) “Go, call your husband,” Jesus told her, “and come back here.” (17) “I don’t have a husband,” the woman replied. “You are putting it well when you say you don’t have a husband,” Jesus answered. (18) “As a matter of fact, you have had five husbands, and the man you have now is not your husband. You have told the truth!”

(19) “Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that You are a prophet! (20) Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain,^g but you Jews claim that Jerusalem is the place where God must be worshiped.” (21) Jesus replied, “Believe Me, dear woman, a time is coming when you won’t be worshiping the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem. (22) You Samaritans don’t understand what you are worshiping. But we Jews understand what we worship, for salvation stems from the Jewish people. (23) However, a time is coming and now has come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. For the Father is always looking for people like this to worship Him. (24) God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth.”

(25) At this, the woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah (called Christ^h) is coming. When He comes, He will explain everything to us.” (26) “I am the Messiah,” Jesus responded—“I Who am speaking to you.”ⁱ

(27) Now just then, His disciples came back, and they were shocked to find Him speaking with a woman. Yet none of them asked, “What do You want?” or “Why are You talking with her?” (28) Then the woman left her water jug and went into town, where she said to the people,^j (29) “Come see a Man Who told me everything I ever did. Could He be the Christ?” (30) So the people left the town and began making their way toward Him.

(31) Meanwhile, the disciples kept urging Jesus, “Rabbi, eat something!” (32) But He told them, “I have food to eat that you don’t know about!” (33) With that, the disciples started asking one another, “Did someone bring Him food to eat?”

(34) Then Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of the One Who sent Me and to finish His work. (35) Don’t you have a saying, ‘Four more months and it will be harvest?’ But look, I tell you! Open your eyes and gaze at the fields! They are already white and ready for harvest. (36) The reaper is being paid^k as he harvests a crop for eternal life. So the sower and the reaper will rejoice together. (37) For the saying is true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ (38) I sent you to reap a crop that you never worked for. Other people have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their work.”

(39) Now many of the Samaritans from that town believed in Jesus because of the woman’s testimony that He had told her everything she ever did. (40) So when the Samaritans came to Him, they kept urging Him to stay with them, and He stayed there two days. (41) And because of His message, many more people became believers. (42) “We no longer believe because of what you said,” they kept telling the woman. “We have heard Him ourselves, and we know that He really is the Savior of the world.”

Jesus Heals an Official’s Son

(43) After the two days were over, Jesus left for Galilee. (44) Now He Himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country. (45) But when He arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed Him because they had seen everything He had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival. For they had also been there.

(46) Then Jesus went back to Cana in Galilee, where He had changed the water into wine. Meanwhile, the son of a royal official was lying sick at Capernaum. (47) So when the official heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to Him and started begging Him to come down and heal his son, who was about to die. (48) At this, Jesus told him, “You people will never believe unless you see miraculous signs and wonders.” (49) “Sir,” the official answered, “Please come down before my boy dies!” (50) But Jesus responded, “Go on home. Your son will live.” And the man took Jesus at His word and left for home.

(51) While he was still on the way, his servants met him. “Your boy is going to live!” they exclaimed. (52) Then he asked them what time his son had become better, and they replied, “The fever left him yesterday at one o’clock in the afternoon.”^l (53) Now the father realized that one o’clock was the exact time Jesus had told him, “Your son will live.” And he and his entire household became believers.

(54) This was the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed after He came to Galilee from Judea.

^aSome manuscripts read *the Lord*. ^b See Gen. 48:22. ^c Literally, *the sixth hour*.
^d Some manuscripts omit the statement in parentheses. ^e Jesus was using the expression *living water* in a spiritual sense. However, *living water* commonly meant “flowing water,” and this is why the woman thought at first that Jesus was offering her literal water. ^f Or *father*—the plural form of the same Greek word is translated *ancestors* in verse 20. ^g The woman was referring to the traditional Samaritan place of worship on Mount Gerizim. ^h The Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. See also verse 29. ⁱ Literally, “*I am!*” Jesus responded, “*the One speaking to you.*” ^j The Greek term that has been translated *people* is gender inclusive. ^k Or *They are white and ready for harvest*.
(36) *The reaper is already being paid* ^l Literally, *at the seventh hour.*”

CHAPTER 5

Jesus Heals a Man at Bethesda

(1) Some time later, there was a Jewish festival, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. (2) Now at the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem, there is a pool which is called Bethesda^a in Aramaic. It has five covered porches, (3) and a great number of disabled people—the blind, the lame, and the paralyzed—used to lie on them.^b

(5) Among these people was a man who had been an invalid for 38 years, (6) and when Jesus saw him lying there, He realized that this man had been in a bad condition for a long time. “Would you like to get well?” Jesus asked him. (7) “Sir,” the invalid replied, “I don’t have anyone^c to help me into the pool when the water is stirred, and while I’m on my way, someone else always goes down ahead of me.” (8) But Jesus said to him, “Get up, pick up your mat, and walk!” (9) And immediately, the man became well, and he picked up his mat and began to walk.

Now that day was a Sabbath. (10) So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “Today is the Sabbath. It is unlawful for you to carry your mat.” (11) At this, he responded, “The Man Who made me well told me to pick up my mat and walk.” (12) “This Fellow Who told you to pick it up and walk,” they retorted, “Who is He?” (13) But the man who had been healed had no idea Who it was because the place was crowded and Jesus had slipped away.

(14) Afterward, Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you are well. Don’t go on sinning anymore, or something worse may happen to you.” (15) Then the man went off and informed the Jews that Jesus was the One Who had made him well.

Jesus Responds to His Critics

(16) So the Jews began to persecute Jesus because He was doing this kind of thing on the Sabbath. (17) But He answered them, “My Father is working continually, and I must do the same.”^d (18) Consequently, the Jews became even more intent on killing Him; not only was He breaking the Sabbath, but He was even calling God His own Father—making Himself equal with God.

(19) Then Jesus said to them, “Most truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by Himself. He can only do what He sees the Father doing, because the Son does exactly what the Father does. (20) For the Father loves the Son and shows Him everything He is doing. And to your amazement, the Father will show Him even greater things to do. (21) For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, in the same way, the Son gives life to anyone He wishes. (22) Moreover, the Father judges no one. He has left the judgment entirely to the Son, (23) so that all people will honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever refuses to honor the Son is refusing to honor the Father Who sent Him.

(24) Most truly I tell you, whoever hears My word and believes the One Who sent Me has eternal life. He will never be condemned, for he has already passed from the realm of death into the realm of life. (25) Most truly I tell you, a time is coming and now has come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear it will live. (26) For just as the Father has life in Himself, in the same way, He has given the Son the right to have life in Himself. (27) And because He is the Son of Man, the Father has given Him authority to judge the world.^e

(28) You should not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all the dead will hear His voice (29) and come out of their graves. Those who have done good will experience a resurrection that results in life, while those who have done evil will experience a resurrection that results in condemnation. (30) I can do nothing by Myself. I judge on the basis of what I hear, and My judgment is just, because My goal is not to please Myself, but the One Who sent Me.

(31) If I testify about Myself, My testimony is not valid.^f (32) But there is Someone else Who is testifying about Me, and I^g know that His testimony is valid.

(33) You sent messengers to John, and he testified to the truth.^h (34) Now I don't rely on human testimony, but I mention it for your own salvation. (35) John was a bright, shining lamp, and for a while, you were willing to enjoy his light.

(36) However, I have even greater testimony than John's. The work that the Father has given Me to finish—the very work I am doing—testifies that the Father has sent Me. (37) What is more, the Father Who sent Me has testified about Me Himself. You have never heard His voice nor seen His form, (38) nor does His word find a home in you, because you don't believe the One He sent. (39) You constantly search the scriptures, because you think you will find eternal life in

them. Now these are the scriptures that testify about Me, (40) and yet you refuse to come to Me to find life.

(41) I am not looking for human praise, (42) but I know you people. You have no love for God in you. (43) I have come with My Father's authority, and you don't accept Me. But if someone else comes with his own authority, you will accept him. (44) How can you believe when you accept praise from one another, and care nothing for the praise that comes from the only God?ⁱ

(45) Do not assume that I will bring charges against you in the Father's court. No, your accuser is Moses—the very Moses in whom you have put your hope. (46) If you really believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. (47) But since you don't believe his writings, how will you believe what I say?"

^aAlthough many Greek manuscripts read *Bethesda*, the Greek manuscripts that are generally regarded as superior read *Bethzatha* or *Bethsaida*. However, one of the Dead Sea Scrolls (the Copper Scroll) applies the name *Bethesda* to an area of Jerusalem where a pool was located. On the basis of this evidence, the reading *Bethesda* has been accepted here. ^b Some later manuscripts add *waiting for the water to move*. (4) *For every now and then, an angel of the Lord went down into the pool and stirred up the water, and the first person to step in after the water was stirred was healed of whatever disease he had*. The manuscript evidence makes it certain that this statement was not part of the original text of John's Gospel. It was added later, probably to explain a popular superstition regarding unusual movements that were observed in the pool's water. ^c The Greek term that has been translated *anyone* in verse 7 and *human* in verses 34 and 41 is gender inclusive. ^d God works continually to sustain life, even on the Sabbath. And since Jesus was God, Sabbath healings were very much in line with His life-giving work. ^e Although the words *the world* do not appear in the original text, they have been added for clarification. ^f According to Deut. 19:15, testimony could not be regarded as valid unless it was supported by two or three witnesses. ^g Some manuscripts read *you*. ^h See John 1:19-28. ⁱ Some manuscripts read *the only One?*

CHAPTER 6

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

(1) Some time later, Jesus went away to the other side of the Lake of Galilee (or Tiberias).^a (2) And a huge crowd of people was following Him, for they had seen the miraculous signs He was performing on the sick. (3) Then Jesus went up into the mountains and sat down with His disciples. (4) Now the Jewish Passover

Festival was near.

(5) When Jesus looked up, He noticed a huge crowd approaching Him. So He asked Philip, “Where can we buy bread to feed these people?” (6) (Jesus already knew what He was going to do, but He asked this question to test Philip.)

(7) “It would take more than eight months’ wages^b to buy enough bread for each of them to have a little,” Philip answered Him. (8) Another of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, also spoke up: (9) “There is a boy here with five barley loaves and two dried fish, but what good are they among so many people?”

(10) Nevertheless, Jesus said, “Have the people^c sit down.” And since there was plenty of grass in that place, the crowd, which numbered about five thousand men, sat down. (11) Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to the people who were sitting there. He also did the same thing with the fish, and the people had as much as they wanted.

(12) When everyone was satisfied, He said to His disciples, “Start collecting the broken pieces that are left over, so nothing is wasted.” (13) At this, they gathered them together and filled twelve baskets with pieces of the five barley loaves that were left over after the people had eaten.

Jesus Walks on the Water

(14) Now after the people saw the miraculous sign^d Jesus performed, the word began to spread—”This really is the Prophet Who was to come into the world!”^e (15) Realizing that they intended to come and make Him king by force, Jesus withdrew^f into the mountains again, where He was alone.

(16) When evening came, His disciples went down to the lake, (17) where they got into a boat and set out for Capernaum on the other side. By this time, it had become dark, and Jesus still had not joined them. (18) What is more, a strong wind was blowing, and the lake was getting rough. (19) Now after the disciples had rowed about three or four miles,^g they saw Jesus walking on the lake as He approached the boat, and they were filled with fear. (20) “It is I!”^h He called out to them. “Don’t be afraid!” (21) Then they were willing to take Him on board, and immediately, the boat reached the shore where they were going.

The Bread of Life

(22) Now in the morning, the people who were still lingering on the opposite shore realized that only one boat had been there and that Jesus had not gotten into it with His disciples. Instead, the disciples had gone away alone. (23) Then some other boats from Tiberias arrived near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks.ⁱ (24) So when the people saw that neither Jesus nor His disciples were there, they got into these boats and went to Capernaum to look for Him.

(25) Eventually, they found Him on the other side of the lake and asked Him, “Rabbi, when did You get here?” (26) Jesus answered them, “Most truly I tell you, you aren’t looking for Me because you saw miraculous signs, but because you ate the loaves of bread until you were content. (27) Stop working for perishable food. Instead, work for food that endures—the food of eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For God the Father has placed His seal of approval on Him.”

(28) Then the people asked Him, “What should we do to perform the works that God requires?” (29) Jesus replied, “This is the work of God—for you to believe in the One He sent.”

(30) But they continued, “What miraculous sign are You going to perform? Let us see it so we can believe You. What work are You going to do? (31) Our ancestorsⁱ ate manna in the desert. As it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”^k (32) Jesus said to them, “Most truly I tell you, Moses didn’t give you the bread from heaven. No, My Father gives you the real Bread from heaven. (33) For God’s Bread comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”^l

(34) “Sir,” they responded, “Give us this bread all the time.” (35) “I am the Bread of Life!” Jesus told them. “The person who comes to Me will never be hungry, and the person who believes in Me will never be thirsty. (36) But as I told you, you have seen My works,^m and you still refuse to believe.

(37) Everyone the Father gives Me will come to Me, and as for the person who comes to Me, I will never turn him away. (38) For I have not come down from heaven to do My will, but the will of the One Who sent Me. (39) And this is His will—that I should lose none of those He has given Me, but raise them up on the last day. (40) For My Father’s will is that everyone who gazes at the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

(41) At this, the Jews began to grumble about Him because He said, “I am the Bread that came down from heaven.” (42) “Isn’t this Jesus, the Son of Joseph?” they kept asking. “Don’t we know His father and mother? How can He say He came down from heaven?” (43) “Stop your grumbling!” Jesus told them. (44) “No one can come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day. (45) It is written in the prophets: ‘They will all be taught by God.’”ⁿ So everyone who has listened to the Father and learned from Him comes to Me. (46) I don’t mean that anyone has seen the Father, except the One Who is from God. He is the only Person Who has seen the Father.

(47) Most truly I tell you, the person who believes^o has eternal life. (48) I am the Bread of Life. (49) Your ancestors ate manna in the desert and died. (50) But I am offering you the Bread that comes down from heaven, and whoever eats It will never die. (51) I am the living Bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats this Bread, he will live forever. For this Bread is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

(52) Now this began a war of words among the Jews. “How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?” they asked. (53) But Jesus continued, “Most truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. (54) Whoever gnaws on My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. (55) For My flesh is real food, and My blood is real drink. (56) Whoever gnaws on My flesh and drinks My blood remains in union with Me and I with him. (57) Just as the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so the person who gnaws on Me will live because of Me. (58) This, then, is the Bread that came down from heaven. Unlike those ancestors who ate manna and died, the person who gnaws on this Bread will live forever.”

(59) Jesus said these things as He was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

Galilee Turns against Jesus

(60) Now after they had listened to Him, many of His disciples remarked, “This message is hard to take! Who can stomach it?” (61) But Jesus was aware that His disciples were grumbling. So He asked them, “Is your faith being shaken over this? (62) What if you see the Son of Man ascending to the place where He was before? (63) The Spirit gives life; the flesh is of no help at all. The words I have spoken to you are spiritual and life-giving. (64) But there are some among you who refuse to believe.” (For Jesus had known from the outset which of them did not believe and who would betray Him.) (65) So He added, “This is why I have told you that no one can come to Me unless the Father makes it possible.”

(66) From that time on, many of Jesus’ disciples turned back and no longer followed Him. (67) “Do you want to leave Me too?” He asked the twelve. (68) Simon Peter replied, “Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words of eternal life. (69) Besides, we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.”^p

(70) “Didn’t I choose the twelve of you?” Jesus replied. “Yet one of you is a devil!” (71) (He was speaking of Judas, the son of Simon, the man from Kerioth.^q For even though Judas was one of the twelve, he was going to betray Jesus.)

^aDuring Jesus’ Galilean ministry, this body of water was known as the Lake of Galilee. However, the town of Tiberias (mentioned in verse 23) had been founded on its shore just a few years before Jesus began His ministry, and by the time John wrote his Gospel, the name of the town had been transferred to the lake. ^bLiterally, *200 denarii*—this was the amount of money that the average worker in the time of Christ earned in eight months. ^cThe Greek term that has been translated *people* in verses 10 and 14 is gender inclusive. ^dSome manuscripts read *signs*. ^eMoses had foretold the rise of another Prophet Who would speak for God with great authority. See Deut. 18:15-19. In Acts 3:22-23, Peter applies this prophecy to Jesus. ^fSome manuscripts read *Jesus fled*. ^gLiterally, *about 20 or 30 stadia*—one stadion equals 607 feet. ^hLiterally, *“I am!”* ⁱSome manuscripts omit *after the Lord had given thanks*. ^jOr *fathers*—see also verses 49 and 58. ^kEx. 16:4; Neh. 9:15, and Ps. 78:24-25 ^lOr *For the Bread of God is the One Who comes down from heaven*

and gives life to the world. The language in verse 33 can be understood as personal or impersonal. However, at the beginning of verse 34, the people still regard it as impersonal, as they do not yet equate the *Bread from heaven* with Jesus.^m Although the words *My works* do not appear in the original text, they are implied. Some manuscripts read *you have seen Me*.ⁿ Isa. 54:13^o Some manuscripts read *the person who believes in Me*.^p Some manuscripts read *the Christ, the Son of the living God*.^q *Kerioth* was a town in southern Judea.

CHAPTER 7

The Unbelief of Jesus' Brothers

(1) Now after this, Jesus continued traveling in Galilee. He had no desire to travel in Judea because the Jews were trying to kill Him. (2) But when the Jewish Festival of Tabernacles was near, (3) His brothers advised Him, "You should leave this place and go to Judea; then Your disciples will see the works You are performing. (4) No one can gain public recognition if he keeps working in secret, so if You are actually doing these things, let the world see them." (5) (For even His brothers did not believe in Him.)

(6) At this, Jesus replied, "The right time for Me has not come yet, but any time is right for you. (7) The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I keep testifying that its deeds are evil. (8) Go on up to the festival yourselves! I'm not going to this festival^a because the time is still not right for Me." (9) So after their conversation, He remained in Galilee.

Jesus Teaches at the Festival

(10) Some time later, after His brothers had gone to the festival, Jesus also went up, not openly, but in secret. (11) Meanwhile, the Jews were watching for Him at the festival. "Where is that Man?" they kept asking. (12) And there was widespread whispering about Him among the crowds. "He is a good Man," some of them were saying. "No, He's leading the people astray," others objected. (13) But no one would speak openly about Him for fear of the Jews.

(14) Finally, when the festival was already half over, Jesus went up to the temple and began to teach. (15) Now the Jews were amazed and asked, "How did this Man learn so much without being discipled?" (16) So Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not My own. It comes from the One Who sent Me. (17) If anyone wants to follow God's will, he will know whether My teaching comes from God or whether I am speaking on My own. (18) The person who speaks on his own is trying to glorify himself. But the Person Who tries to glorify the One Who sent Him is sincere, and there is nothing false about Him. (19) Didn't Moses give you

the law? Yet none of you are keeping it! Why are you trying to kill Me?"

(20) "You're demon-possessed!" the crowd replied. "No one is trying to kill You!" (21) But Jesus continued, "I performed one good work,^b and all of you are shocked. (22) Yet you circumcise a child even on the Sabbath, because Moses gave you the law of circumcision, although it didn't originate with Moses, but with the patriarchs. (23) So if a child can be circumcised on the Sabbath to avoid breaking the law of Moses, why are you angry with Me for making a man completely well on the Sabbath? (24) Stop judging My actions by the way they appear, and make an honest judgment!"

Is Jesus the Christ?^c

(25) Now this dialogue prompted some of the citizens of Jerusalem to begin asking, "Isn't He the Man they are trying to kill? (26) Look! He's speaking in public, and they aren't saying anything to Him. Have our leaders actually decided that He is the Christ? (27) And yet we know where this Man came from. But when the Christ appears, no one will know where He came from."

(28) So as Jesus was teaching in the temple, He cried out, "Yes, you know Me, and you know where I came from. But I have not come on My own. I was sent by the One Who is genuine.^d Even though you don't know Him, (29) I know Him because I came from Him, and He sent Me here." (30) With that, they tried to arrest Him, but no one laid a hand on Him because His time had not come yet. (31) Nevertheless, many of the people in the crowd believed in Him and kept asking, "When the Christ comes, will He perform more miraculous signs than this Man has done?"

Guards Are Sent to Arrest Jesus

(32) Now the Pharisees heard the people whispering these things about Jesus. So the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest Him. (33) At this, Jesus spoke up, "I will be with you just a little longer, and then I am going away to the One Who sent Me. (34) You will look for Me, but you won't find Me. And where I am going, you cannot come."

(35) "Where is He planning to go, so we won't find Him?" the Jews asked one another. "Will He go to our people who live among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? (36) What did He mean when He said, 'You will look for Me, but you won't find Me,' and 'Where I am going, you cannot come?'"

Jesus Teaches about the Spirit

(37) On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood up and cried aloud, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me. (38) And let the one who believes in Me drink. As the scripture has put it, 'Rivers of living water will flow out of God's heart.'^e (39) (Jesus said this about the Spirit, Whom the believers were destined

to receive. For the Spirit^f was still absent, because Jesus had not been glorified yet.)

Jesus Causes Division

(40) Now after they heard these words, some of the people commented, “This Man really is the Prophet.”^g (41) Others were saying, “This is the Christ.” But still others began to ask, “The Christ can’t come from Galilee, can He? (42) Doesn’t scripture say that the Christ will come from David’s line of descendants^h and from David’s village of Bethlehem?”

(43) So there was a division among the people because of Jesus, (44) and some of them wanted to arrest Him. But no one laid hands on Him.

The Guards Refuse to Arrest Jesus

(45) Finally, the temple guards returned. “Why didn’t you bring Him?” the chief priests and Pharisees asked. (46) “No oneⁱ ever spoke the way this Man does!” the guards replied. (47) At this, the Pharisees retorted, “You haven’t been deceived also, have you? (48) Is there a single leader or Pharisee who has believed in Him? (49) But these people who don’t know the law are cursed!”

(50) Then Nicodemus (the Pharisee who had previously gone to see Jesus) asked them, (51) “Does our law permit us to condemn a person without hearing him first to find out what he is doing?” (52) “Are you a Galilean too?” they replied. “Study it out and see for yourself that the Prophet does not come from Galilee.”^j

^aSome manuscripts read *I’m not going to this festival yet.* ^b Jesus was referring to the healing at the Pool of Bethesda, which took place on the Sabbath. See John 5:1-15. ^c The Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. See also verses 26, 27, 31, 41, and 42. ^d Some manuscripts read *Who is true.* ^e Or “*If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. (38) And whoever believes in Me—as the scripture has put it, ‘Rivers of living water will flow out of his heart.’*” Since the correct reading is uncertain, there is also uncertainty as to which scripture is being alluded to. ^f Some manuscripts read *the Holy Spirit.* ^g Moses had foretold the rise of another Prophet Who would speak for God with great authority. See Deut. 18:15-19. *The Prophet* appears again in verse 52. ^h Literally, *David’s seed* ⁱ The Greek term that has been translated *No one/person* in verses 46 and 51 is gender inclusive. ^j Some manuscripts read *no prophet comes from Galilee.*”

Note: The best manuscripts do not contain John 7:53-8:11. Many other ancient manuscripts insert this passage after John 7:36; 7:44; 7:52; 21:25, or Luke 21:38. Both the textual evidence and the literary style of the passage indicate that it was not part of the original Gospel of John. However, its place in the canon of scripture should not be questioned, as it almost certainly records a real event in Jesus’ ministry. For these reasons, it has been included in an appendix that follows the last chapter of this Gospel.

CHAPTER 8

The Light of the World

(12) Now Jesus spoke to the people again and said, “I am the Light of the world. The person who follows Me will never walk in darkness, for he will have the Light of Life.” (13) At this, the Pharisees protested, “Since You are testifying about Yourself, Your testimony is not valid.”^a

(14) Jesus answered them, “Even if I am testifying about Myself, My testimony is valid. For I know where I came from and where I am going. But you don’t know where I came from or where I am going. (15) You judge by human standards, while I judge no one. (16) And yet if I do judge, My verdict is accurate. For I am not alone when I judge; I and the Father Who sent Me do it together. (17) It is written in your law that the testimony of two individuals^b is valid. (18) I am the One Who testifies about Myself, and the Father Who sent Me also testifies about Me.”

(19) Then they asked Him, “Where is this Father of Yours?” Jesus replied, “You don’t know Me or My Father. If you knew Me, you would know My Father as well.” (20) He spoke these words as He was teaching in the temple treasury. But no one arrested Him because His time had not come yet.

You Will Die in Your Sins

(21) Once again, Jesus said to them, “I am going away, and you will look for Me. But you will die in your sin, and where I am going, you cannot come.” (22) With that, the Jews began to ask, “Surely He won’t kill Himself, will He? Could this be what He means when He says, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come?’”

(23) So Jesus continued, “You are from below; I am from above. You are from this world; I am not from this world. (24) That is why I told you that you will die in your sins. For unless you believe that I really am Who I claim to be,^c you will die in your sins.”

(25) “Who are You?” they demanded. Jesus replied, “Why am I even speaking to you at all?^d (26) I have many things to say about you and much to condemn. But the One Who sent Me is truthful, and I tell the world what I have heard from Him.”

(27) Now they did not realize that He was talking to them about the Father. (28) So Jesus said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, you will know Who I am.^e And you will know that I do nothing on My own; instead, I speak exactly as the Father has taught Me. (29) The One Who sent Me is with Me. He has not left Me alone, because I always do what pleases Him.”

(30) While He was speaking, many of the people believed in Him.

The Truth Will Set You Free

(31) Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in Him, “If you continue to follow My word, you are truly My disciples. (32) And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (33) “We are Abraham’s descendants,”^f they responded. “We have never been enslaved by anyone. So how can You say that we will be set free?”

(34) Jesus replied, “Most truly I tell you, anyone who keeps committing sin is a slave of sin. (35) Now a slave has no permanent standing in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. (36) So if the Son sets you free, you will have real freedom. (37) I know you are Abraham’s descendants. But you are determined to kill Me because My word has no place in your lives. (38) I am telling you what I have seen in the Father’s presence, and you should practice what you have heard from the Father.”^g

Your Father Is the Devil

(39) “Our father is Abraham!” they answered. But Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would act like Abraham. (40) As it is, you are trying to kill Me—a Man Who told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham didn’t do this! (41) You are doing what your father does.” “We weren’t born out of wedlock!”^h they protested. “And we have one Father—God!”

(42) “If God were your Father, you would love Me,” Jesus replied. “For I came from God, and now I am here. I have not come on My own; I was sent by God. (43) Why don’t you understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot bear to hear My words. (44) Your father is the devil, and you long to carry out your father’s desires. He has been killing people from the beginning and has never been truthful, for there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he is speaking his own language. For he is a liar and the father of lies. (45) But since I tell the truth, you don’t believe Me.

(46) Can any of you prove Me guilty of sin? So if I am telling you the truth, why don’t you believe Me? (47) The person who belongs to God listens to what God says. You don’t belong to God, and that’s why you refuse to listen.”

Jesus and Abraham

(48) At this, the Jews answered Him, “Aren’t we right when we say that You are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?” (49) “No, I am not demon-possessed,” Jesus replied. “But I am honoring My Father, and you are dishonoring Me. (50) I’m not trying to gain glory for Myself. But there is Someone Who wants Me to have it, and He is the One Who judges. (51) Most truly I tell you, if anyone obeys My word, he will never experience death.”

(52) “Now we know for sure that You are demon-possessed,” the Jews responded. “Abraham died, and so did the prophets. But You say that if anyone obeys Your word, he will never taste death. (53) You aren’t greater than our father Abraham, are You? He died, and the prophets also died. Who do You think You are?”

(54) Jesus answered them, “If I glorify Myself, My glory amounts to nothing. My Father is the One Who glorifies Me. Although you keep saying, ‘He is our God,’ (55) you have not known Him. But I know Him, and if I said I didn’t, I would be a liar like you. Yes, I know Him, and I obey His word.

(56) Your father Abraham was thrilled at the thought of seeing My day. Then he saw it and was glad.” (57) “You aren’t even 50 years old!” the Jews objected. “How could You possibly have seen Abraham?”^a

(58) “Most truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “before Abraham sprang into existence, I AM!”^b (59) At this, they picked up stones to throw at Him. But Jesus concealed Himself and left the temple.

^aAccording to Deut. 19:15, testimony could not be regarded as valid unless it was supported by two or three witnesses. This also explains Jesus’ statement in verses 17-18. ^b The Greek term that has been translated *individuals* is gender inclusive. ^c Literally, *For unless you believe that I am,* ^d The meaning of the Greek is uncertain. ^e Literally, *you will know that I am.* ^f Literally, *Abraham’s seed*—see also verse 37. ^g Some manuscripts read *I am telling you what I have seen in My Father’s presence, and you are doing what you have heard from your father.* ^h It seems to have been common knowledge that there was something strange about the birth of Jesus. His enemies would not have accepted the reality of His virgin birth, so when they stated that they weren’t born out of wedlock, they may have been subtly implying that He was an illegitimate child. ⁱ Some manuscripts read, *“How could Abraham have possibly seen You?”* ^j When God appeared in the burning bush, He instructed Moses to tell the Israelis that I AM had sent him. See Ex. 3:13-14. As a result of this experience, I AM became God’s sacred name; so when Jesus applied this name to Himself, He could not have made a higher claim to Deity.

CHAPTER 9

Jesus Heals a Blind Man

(1) As Jesus was walking along, He saw a man who had been born blind. (2) “Rabbi,” His disciples asked Him, “why was this man born blind? Was it because of his sin or his parents’ sin?” (3) Jesus replied, “It wasn’t because of this man’s sin or his parents’ sin. He was born blind so that God’s work could be displayed in his life. (4) We must do the work of the One Who sent Me^a while it is day. Night is coming, when no one can work. (5) While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world.”

(6) Now after Jesus had said this, He spit on the ground and made some mud with the saliva. Then He smeared the mud on the man’s eyes (7) and told him, “Go to the Pool of Siloam^b and wash.” (The name of this pool means “The One Who Has Been Sent.”) So the man went away to wash his face, and he came back seeing.

(8) At this, his neighbors and the people who had previously observed him as a beggar began to ask, “Isn’t he the fellow who used to sit and beg?” (9) “He’s the one!” some of them were saying. “No, he only looks like him,” others responded. But the man kept insisting, “I am the one!”^c

(10) “Well how did you receive your sight?” they inquired. (11) He replied, “The Man named Jesus made some mud and smeared it on my eyes. Then He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went there and washed, and afterward, I could see.” (12) “Where is this Man?” they asked. “I don’t know,” he answered.

The Pharisees Investigate the Healing

(13) Then they brought the man who had been blind to the Pharisees. (14) Now Jesus had made the mud and had given the man his sight on a Sabbath day. (15) So the Pharisees also began an inquiry as to how he had received his sight. “He put mud on my eyes,” the man told them, “and after I washed, I could see.”

(16) “This Fellow can’t be from God,” some of the Pharisees remarked. “He doesn’t keep the Sabbath.” But others asked, “How can a sinful man perform such miraculous signs?” So there was a division among them.

(17) Then they questioned the blind man again. “What do you have to say about Him? It was your eyes He healed.” “He is a prophet,” the man answered.

(18) But until they had summoned his parents, the Jews refused to believe that the man had really been blind and had received his sight. (19) “Is this your son,” they asked, “the one you say was born blind? How is it that he can see now?”

(20) “We know he is our son and that he was born blind,” his parents replied. (21)

“But we don’t know how he can see or who gave him his sight. Ask him! He’s an adult and can speak for himself!” (22) (The man’s parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews. For the Jewish leaders had already come to an agreement that anyone who confessed Jesus as the Christ^d would be expelled from the synagogue.^e (23) This is why his parents remarked, “He’s an adult; ask him!”)

(24) So for a second time, they summoned the man who had been blind and told him, “Give God the praise. We know this Fellow is a sinner.” (25) “I don’t know if He’s a sinner,” the man responded. “But there’s one thing I do know. I used to be blind, and now I can see!” (26) Then they asked him, “What did He do to you? How did He give you your sight?” (27) “I already told you, and you paid no attention,” the man objected. “Why do you want to hear it all over again? You don’t want to become His disciples too, do you?”

(28) At this, they replied with contempt, “You are that Fellow’s disciple, but we are Moses’ disciples! (29) We know God spoke to Moses, but as for that Fellow, we don’t know where He came from.” (30) “Now that’s remarkable!” the man answered. “You don’t know where He came from, and yet He gave me my sight. (31) We know God doesn’t listen to sinners. But He does listen to anyone who is devout and who does His will. (32) Ever since the present age began, it has been unheard of for anyone to give sight to a person who was born blind. (33) So if this Man were not from God, He couldn’t do anything like that.” (34) “You were completely born in sin,” they replied, “and are you trying to teach us?” And with that, they threw him out.^f

Spiritual Blindness

(35) When Jesus heard that they had thrown the man out, He found him and asked, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”^g (36) “Tell me Who He is, Sir, so I can believe in Him,” the man answered. (37) “You have seen Him,” Jesus replied. “In fact, He is speaking with you right now.” (38) “Lord, I believe!” the man exclaimed. And he worshiped Jesus.

(39) Then Jesus commented,^h “I came into the world to bring judgment—so the blind would see and those who see would become blind.” (40) Now some Pharisees who were with Him overheard these words and asked, “We aren’t blind, are we?”

(41) Jesus replied, “If you were blind, you would have no record of sin. But since you keep claiming to see, your sin remains.”

^aSome manuscripts read *We must do the work of the One Who sent us*. Other manuscripts read *I must do the work of the One Who sent Me*. ^b In Hebrew, this pool is known as *Shiloah*. See Isa. 8:6. When Judah was being threatened by Assyria, King Hezekiah constructed a tunnel to bring water from the Gihon Spring into the city of Jerusalem. This water drained into the Pool of Siloam, which was actually a large reservoir. The name *Shiloah* appears to be derived from the Hebrew verb root that means *to send*. Originally, this name

probably indicated that the water was sent into the pool through a channel. But for John, the name had spiritual significance. Blindness was cured by Jesus, the One Who *was sent* by the Father. ^c Literally, “*I am!*” In this case, there are no overtones of Deity in the use of the phrase. ^d The Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. ^e Expulsion from the synagogue was the Jewish equivalent of being excommunicated or disfellowshipped. ^f It is uncertain whether this statement means that the Pharisees expelled the man from the synagogue or whether they simply drove him out of their presence. ^g Some manuscripts read *Son of God?* ^h Some manuscripts omit verse 38 and the first three words of verse 39.

CHAPTER 10

The Parable of the Shepherd

(1) “Most truly I tell you, anyone who doesn’t enter the sheep pen through the gate, but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a robber. (2) The person who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the flock. (3) The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. (4) When he has driven all of them out, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they recognize his voice. (5) But they will never follow a stranger. Instead, they will run away from him because they don’t recognize the voices of strangers.”

(6) Now even though Jesus told them this parable, they had no idea what He was talking about.

The Good Shepherd

(7) So Jesus spoke to them again: “Most truly I tell you, I am the Gate for the sheep. (8) All who came along^a were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. (9) I am the Gate. Anyone who enters the pen through Me will be kept safe.^b He will go in and out and find pasture. (10) The thief only comes to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so the sheep can have life, and have it to the full.

(11) I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd lays down^c His life on behalf of the sheep. (12) The hired worker is not the shepherd, and he doesn’t own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the flock and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters the sheep. (13) The man runs away because he is a hired worker, and the sheep mean nothing to him.

(14) I am the good Shepherd. I know My sheep, and My sheep know Me—(15) just as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father—and I am giving^d My life

on behalf of the sheep. (16) I have other sheep that are not from this pen, and I must bring them as well. They too will listen to My voice, and there will be one flock with one Shepherd. (17) This is why the Father loves Me—I am laying down My life, only to receive it back again. (18) No one can take it away from Me; I am laying it down of My own free will. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it back again. This is the directive I have received from My Father.”

The Unity of the Father and the Son

(19) So once again there was a division among the Jews because of Jesus’ words. (20) Many of them were saying, “He is demon-possessed and a raving maniac. Why go on listening to Him?” (21) But others replied, “These are not the words of a demon-possessed man. How can a demon give sight to the blind?”

(22) Now it was winter, and while the Festival of Hanukkah^e was being celebrated in Jerusalem, (23) Jesus was walking in the section of the temple known as Solomon’s Colonnade. (24) Then the Jews formed a circle around Him and began demanding, “How long are You going to keep us in suspense?^f If You are the Christ,^g tell us plainly.”

(25) Jesus replied, “I did tell you, but you don’t believe. The works I am doing in My Father’s name testify for Me. (26) But you don’t believe because you aren’t My sheep. (27) My sheep listen to My voice. I know them, and they follow Me. (28) I am giving them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from Me. (29) My Father, Who has given them to Me, is greater than anyone else,^h and no one can snatch them away from the Father. (30) I and the Father are one.”

Jesus Is Rejected

(31) Then the Jews picked up stones to throw at Him again. (32) At this, Jesus responded, “I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these are you stoning Me?” (33) “We are not stoning You for any good work,” the Jews answered Him. “We are stoning You for blasphemy, because You, a mere man, are claiming to be God.”

(34) Jesus replied, “Isn’t it written in your law, ‘I said, “You are gods”’?ⁱ (35) Now the law applies the term ‘gods’ to those who received God’s word, and scripture cannot be set aside. (36) So what about the One the Father consecrated and sent into the world? Why are you accusing Me of blasphemy for claiming to be God’s Son? (37) If I am not doing My Father’s works, do not believe Me. (38) But if I am doing them, even though you don’t believe Me, at least believe the works. Then you will realize and understand^j that the Father is in Me and I am in the Father.”

(39) At this, they tried to arrest Him again, but Jesus slipped out of their grasp (40) and went back across the Jordan River to stay near the place where John

was baptizing in the early days. (41) And many people came to Him there. “John never performed a miraculous sign,” they kept saying. “But everything John said about this Man was true!” (42) So while they were there, many of them believed in Jesus.

^aSome manuscripts read *All who came before Me*. ^bLiterally, *will be saved*. ^cSome manuscripts read *The good Shepherd gives*. ^dSome manuscripts read *laying down*. However, the manuscript evidence for *giving* is stronger here than in verse 11. ^eThis festival comes in late November or December and commemorates the victory of the Maccabees over the evil king, Antiochus Epiphanes. ^fThe meaning of the Greek is uncertain. ^gThe Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. ^hSome manuscripts read *What My Father has given Me is greater than anything else*. ⁱPs. 82:6 (Septuagint) ^jSome manuscripts read *realize and believe*. Other manuscripts simply read *realize*.

CHAPTER 11

The Death of Lazarus

(1) There was a sick man named Lazarus who was from Bethany, the village where Mary and her sister Martha lived. (2) (This Mary was the same woman who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped His feet with her hair, and it was her brother Lazarus who was sick.)

(3) So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, “Lord, the friend You love is sick.” (4) But when Jesus heard their message, He responded, “This sickness will not end in death. Instead, it will bring God glory, and God’s Son will be glorified through it.”

(5) Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. (6) Nevertheless, when He heard that Lazarus was sick, He stayed where He was for two more days. (7) Then He said to His disciples, “Let’s go back to Judea.” (8) “But Rabbi,” the disciples objected, “just recently, the Jews were trying to stone You, and are You going back there again?” (9) Jesus replied, “Aren’t there twelve hours of daylight? Anyone can walk by day without stumbling because he sees the light of this world. (10) But he stumbles if he walks at night, for there is no light to guide him.”

(11) Jesus made this remark and then added, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to wake him up.” (12) At this, His disciples replied, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will get well.” (13) Now Jesus had been speaking of his death, but the disciples thought He meant natural sleep. (14) Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead! (15) And I am glad I wasn’t there, because this will give you a chance to believe. So let’s go to him.”

(16) Then Thomas (whose name means the Twin) commented to his fellow disciples, “We might as well go too, so we can die with Him!”^a

The Resurrection and the Life

(17) When Jesus arrived, He found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. (18) Now Bethany was just under two miles^b from Jerusalem, (19) and many Jews had come to visit Martha and Mary, to comfort them over the loss of their brother. (20) But as soon as Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet Him, while Mary stayed at home.

(21) “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if You had been here, my brother would not have died! (22) Yet even now I know that God will give You whatever You request.” (23) “Your brother will rise again,” Jesus responded. (24) “I know he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day,” Martha answered Him.

(25) Then Jesus said to her, “I am the Resurrection and the Life! The person who believes in Me will live even if he dies, (26) and anyone who is alive and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?” (27) “Yes, Lord,” she replied. “I have always believed that You are the Christ,^c the Son of God, Who was to come into the world.”

(28) With these words, Martha went back and called her sister Mary aside privately. “The Teacher is here,” she said, “and He is asking for you.” (29) When Mary heard these words, she got up at once and went to Him.

Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead

(30) Now Jesus was still outside the village in the place where Martha had met Him. (31) Meanwhile, the Jews who were in the house comforting Mary noticed how quickly she got up and left, and since they assumed she was going to the tomb to cry, they followed her. (32) But Mary went to the place where Jesus was, and as soon as she saw Him, she fell at His feet and said, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died!”

(33) When Jesus saw Mary crying, and the Jews who had followed her crying with her, He groaned deeply^d and became very troubled. (34) “Where have you laid him?” He asked. “Come and see, Lord,” they replied. (35) Then Jesus burst into tears. (36) “See how much He loved the man!” the Jews remarked. (37) But some of them responded, “He gave sight to the blind man, so why couldn’t He keep this man from dying?” (38) With that, Jesus gave another deep groan as He came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying across its entrance.

(39) “Take away the stone,” Jesus ordered. But Martha, the dead man’s sister, objected, “Lord, he has already been dead for four days! By this time, he will stink!” (40) Then Jesus asked her, “Didn’t I tell you that if you believed, you would see God’s glory?” (41) So they took away the stone. At this point, Jesus

looked up and said, “Father, I thank You for hearing Me. (42) I know You always hear Me, but I am saying this for the good of the people standing here—so they will believe that You sent Me.”

(43) Now after He had said this, Jesus lifted up His voice and cried, “Lazarus, come out!” (44) Then the man who had been dead came out, his hands and feet wrapped in strips of linen and a burial cloth around his face. “Unwrap him and let him go,” Jesus told them.

Caiaphas Plots against Jesus

(45) So many of the Jews who came to visit Mary believed in Jesus when they saw what He did. (46) But some of them went off and reported the news to the Pharisees. (47) Then the chief priests and the Pharisees assembled the Sanhedrin.^e “What are we going to do?” they asked. “This Man is performing many miraculous signs. (48) If we let Him go on like this, everyone will believe in Him, and then the Romans will come and sweep away both our temple^f and our nation.”

(49) Finally, one of them named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up: “You have no sense at all!^g (50) Don’t you realize that it will be better for you^h if one Man dies instead of the people? In that case, the whole nation won’t perish.”ⁱ

(51) Now Caiaphas did not speak these words on his own. As high priest that year, he was prophesying^j that Jesus would die on behalf of the Jewish nation—(52) and not for the Jewish nation alone—He would also gather the scattered children of God into one body.

(53) So from that day on, the leaders plotted to kill Jesus. (54) Consequently, Jesus no longer traveled publicly among the Jews. Instead, He left for the region near the desert, to a town called Ephraim.^k And He stayed there with the disciples.

The Last Passover

(55) Now the Jewish Passover was approaching, and many people from the countryside went up to Jerusalem to purify themselves before the festival. (56) They were also looking for Jesus, and as they stood in the temple, they kept asking one another, “What do you think? He isn’t coming to the festival at all, is He?” (57) By this time, the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who knew where Jesus was should come to them with the information, so they could arrest Him.

^aThomas realized that the threat to Jesus’ life in Judea was real. But he loved his Lord and expressed a willingness to die with Him, if necessary. ^b Literally, *15 stadia*—one stadion equals 607 feet. ^c The Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. ^d The Greek term that has been translated *groaned deeply* can also be an expression of

anger. If John is telling us that Jesus was angry, His anger was probably directed at sin and death. The same Greek term appears again in verse 38. ^e The Great Sanhedrin (or Great Council) functioned as the highest Jewish court. ^f Literally, *our place* ^g According to the first century historian, Flavius Josephus, the Sadducees (Caiaphas was a Sadducee) were known for their rude language. ^h Some manuscripts read *better for us*. Other manuscripts simply read *better*. ⁱ Caiaphas' statement is quite ironic. Even though Jesus died, the very thing Caiaphas and the other members of the Sanhedrin feared most actually took place. In A.D. 70, the Roman army destroyed the temple, the city of Jerusalem, and the Jewish nation. ^j Although Caiaphas had been speaking like a cynical politician, he failed to realize that there was a deeper meaning to his words. The Holy Spirit had been speaking through him without his knowing it. Jesus really did die in the people's place, not merely to save them from the Romans, but to save them from sin and death. ^k The location of this town is uncertain. Some have identified it with *Et-Taiyibeh*, about 15 miles from Jerusalem.

CHAPTER 12

Mary Anoints Jesus with Perfume

(1) It was six days before the Passover when Jesus arrived in Bethany. This was the town where Lazarus lived—the man Jesus had raised from the dead. (2) Now a supper was given in Jesus' honor, and Martha was serving, while Lazarus was among the guests who were reclining^a at the table with Him. (3) Then Mary^b brought a pound^c of very costly perfume that was pure nard^d and anointed Jesus' feet. Afterward, she wiped them with her hair, and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

(4) At this, one of Jesus' disciples (Judas, the man from Kerioth,^e who was going to betray Him) protested, (5) "Why wasn't this perfume sold for 300 denarii,^f and the money given to the poor?" (6) Judas said this, not out of any concern for the poor, but because he was a thief. He was in charge of the money bag, and he used to help himself to the funds that were put in it.

(7) "Leave her alone!" Jesus exclaimed. "She bought this perfume so she could keep it for the day of My burial.^g (8) You will always have the poor with you, but you won't always have Me."^h

The Plot to Murder Lazarus

(9) Now the Jews had learned that Jesus was in Bethany, and a huge crowd came out, not only because of Him, but also to see Lazarus, whom He had raised from

the dead. (10) So the chief priests plotted to kill Lazarus as well, (11) because he was the reason many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in Him.

Palm Sunday—Jesus Enters Jerusalem in Triumph

(12) The next day, the huge crowd of pilgrims that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem. (13) So they took palm branchesⁱ and went out to meet Him. And they began to shout:

“Hosanna!^l
How blessed is the One
Who is coming in the name of the Lord!^k
How blessed is the King of Israel!”

(14) Then Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it. As it is written:

(15) “Do not be afraid,
people^l of Zion.
Look! Your King is coming,
sitting on a donkey’s colt.”^m

(16) At first, His disciples didn’t understand all this. But after Jesus had been glorified, they remembered that these things had been written about Him and that they had done them for Him.

(17) Now the people who had been with Jesus when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised Him from the dead kept witnessing to others about it. (18) And this explains why the crowd went out to meet Jesus—they had heard about the miraculous signs He had performed. (19) Then the Pharisees said to one another, “See, we are getting nowhere! Look how the world has gone after Him!”

Jesus and the Greeks

(20) Now there were some Greeks among the people who had gone up to worship at the festival, (21) and they approached Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we want to see Jesus.” (22) So Philip went and told Andrew, and the two of them went to tell Jesus.

(23) Then Jesus answered them, “The time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.ⁿ (24) Most truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains a single grain. But if it dies, it produces a multitude of grain. (25) The person who loves his life will lose it, while the person who hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternity. (26) If anyone wants to serve Me, he must follow Me. For where I am, there My servant will also be. And anyone who wants to serve Me will be honored by My Father.

(27) Now I am deeply troubled, and what should I say—‘Father, deliver Me from this time of suffering?’ No, the very reason I came was to endure this time. (28) Father, glorify Your name!” Then a voice spoke from heaven, “I have glorified it,

and I will glorify it again.” (29) At this, the people who were standing there said they heard thunder, while others said that an angel had spoken to Him.

(30) But Jesus answered them, “That voice was for your benefit, not Mine. (31) Now is the time for this world’s judgment; now the prince of this world will be driven out. (32) And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to Myself.” (33) (Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death He was going to die.)

(34) Then the people spoke up: “We have understood from the law that the Christ^o will live forever, so how can You say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?” (35) Jesus replied, “The Light will be with you just a little longer. Keep walking while you have the Light, so the darkness will not overtake you. For the person who walks in the dark has no idea where he is going. (36) While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so you can become children of light.”

The People Refuse to Believe

Now after Jesus had said this, He went away and concealed Himself from them. (37) And even though He had performed so many miraculous signs in their presence, the people refused to believe in Him. (38) So the words that were spoken by the prophet Isaiah were fulfilled:

“Lord, who has believed what we have heard?
And to whom has the power of the Lord
been revealed?”^p

(39) This is why they were unable to believe. For Isaiah says elsewhere:

(40) “He has blinded their eyes
and hardened their hearts,
so they cannot see with their eyes
or comprehend with their minds
and turn to Me for healing.”^q

(41) Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus’ glory and spoke about Him. (42) However, even among the leaders, many believed in Him. But because of the Pharisees, they refused to confess Him openly, for fear they would be expelled from the synagogue.^r (43) For they loved human^s praise more than praise from God.

Judgment by Jesus’ Word

(44) Then Jesus cried out, “The person who believes in Me is actually believing in the One Who sent Me. (45) And when he looks at Me, he sees the One Who sent Me. (46) I have come into the world as Light, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness.

(47) Now as for the person who listens to My words without obeying them, I

do not condemn him. For I did not come to condemn the world, but to save it. (48) And yet there is a judge for the person who rejects Me and does not accept My words. The very message I spoke will condemn him on the last day. (49) For I have not spoken on My own. No, the Father Who sent Me has given Me a directive about what to say and how to speak. (50) And because I know that the Father's directive leads to eternal life, whatever I say is exactly what He has told Me to say.”

^aIn the time of Jesus, people who were attending a feast commonly reclined on couches as they ate. ^bAlthough this story appears in all four Gospels, only John informs us that Mary was the woman who anointed Jesus. ^cThe Roman pound weighed twelve ounces. ^dThe meaning of the Greek term that has been translated *pure* is uncertain. *Nard* is an aromatic oil that is derived from the root of a plant native to India. ^e*Kerioth* was a town in southern Judea. ^fThe denarius was a silver coin that was minted by the Romans. The average worker in the time of Christ earned 300 denarii per year. ^gThe meaning of the Greek is uncertain. ^hSome manuscripts omit verse 8. ⁱIt was customary to welcome a king by waving palm branches. Due to its high elevation and cool winter temperatures, palm trees are not common in the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem. However, they are plentiful in the lower valleys a few miles to the east. ^j*Hosanna* is a transliteration from the Aramaic. This expression literally means *please save!* and can be understood as a prayer that salvation will come to Israel through Jesus. However, *Hosanna* also came to function as an exclamation of praise to God. It is likely that both of these meanings are present here. ^kPs. 118:25-26 (Septuagint) ^lLiterally, *daughter*—the Holy Scriptures often utilize a female figure in depicting God's people. ^mZech. 9:9 ⁿJesus spoke of His crucifixion as His glorification. ^oThe Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. ^pIsa. 53:1 (Septuagint) ^qIsa. 6:10 ^rExpulsion from the synagogue was the Jewish equivalent of being excommunicated or disfellowshipped. ^sThe Greek term that has been translated *human* is gender inclusive.

CHAPTER 13

Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet

(1) Before the Passover Festival, Jesus was aware that the time had come for Him to move on from this world and return to the Father. But He loved His own people who were in the world, and His love for them was complete.^a (2) By the time supper was being served,^b the devil had already made up his mind that Judas, the man from Kerioth^c (Simon's son), would betray Jesus.^d

(3) Now Jesus knew that the Father had placed everything in His power, and that He had come from God and was returning to God. (4) So He got up from supper, laid aside His outer clothing, and tied a towel around His waist. (5) Then He poured water into a basin and started washing the disciples' feet and drying them

with the towel that was wrapped around Him.

(6) But when it was Simon Peter's turn, Peter spoke up, "Lord, are You going to wash my feet?" (7) "Right now, you don't understand what I am doing," Jesus told him. "But you will understand it later." (8) "Absolutely not!" Peter insisted. "You will never wash my feet!" At this, Jesus answered him, "If I don't wash you, you have nothing in common with Me." (9) "Then, Lord," Simon Peter said, "Don't just wash my feet; wash my hands and my head as well!" (10) Jesus replied, "The person who has taken a bath has no further need to wash, except for his feet.^e He is completely clean. And you men are clean, though not all of you." (11) (Jesus added the words "not all of you are clean" because He knew who was going to betray Him.)

(12) Now after He had finished washing their feet, He got His clothes and lay down^f at the table again. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" He asked them. (13) "You call Me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are correct, for that is what I am. (14) So if I, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. (15) I have given you an example. You are to do as I have done for you. (16) Most truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. (17) If you understand these things, you will be blessed if you practice them.

Jesus Predicts His Betrayal

(18) I am not talking about all of you. I am acquainted with the men I chose, but there is a scripture which must be fulfilled: 'The person who chews My bread has lifted up his heel against Me.'^g (19) I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen, you will believe that I really am Who I claim to be.^h (20) Most truly I tell you, whoever accepts My messenger accepts Me, and whoever accepts Me accepts the One Who sent Me."

(21) Now after He had said this, Jesus was deeply troubled. "Most truly I tell you, one of you will betray Me," He declared. (22) At this, the disciples began staring at one another, baffled as to which of them He meant. (23) One of them, the disciple Jesus loved, was reclining next to Him. (24) So Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask Him who He means."

(25) Then that disciple leaned against Jesus' chest and asked, "Lord, who is it?" (26) Jesus answered him, "It is the man who will take this piece of bread after I have dipped it in the bowl." Then He dipped the bread and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon, the man from Kerioth. (27) And as soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered him. "Be quick about what you are doing," Jesus told him.

(28) But none of the others who were reclining at the table understood why Jesus had said this to him. (29) Some of them were thinking that since Judas had the money bag, Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival or to give something to the poor. (30) So Judas took the bread and went outside

without delay. And it was night.

(31) After Judas was gone, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. (32) God will also glorify the Son of Man in Himself,ⁱ and He will glorify Him at once.

The New Commandment

(33) Dear children, I will be with you just a little while longer. You will look for Me, and as I told the Jews, I am also telling you—where I am going, you cannot come.

(34) I am giving you a new commandment. Love one another! You must love one another as I have loved you. (35) Everyone will know that you are My disciples if you love one another.”

Jesus Predicts Peter’s Denial

(36) Then Simon Peter asked Him, “Lord, where are You going?” Jesus answered him, “At the present time, you cannot follow Me to the place I am going. But you will follow Me later.”

(37) “Lord,^j why can’t I follow You at the present time?” Peter continued. “I would lay down my life for You.” (38) “Really?” Jesus replied. “Would you lay down your life for Me? Most truly I tell you, the rooster will not crow until you have denied Me three times.”

^aOr *and He loved them to the end*. ^bSome manuscripts read *By the time supper was finished*. However, verses 4 and 26 seem to indicate that supper was still in progress. ^c*Kerioth* was a town in southern Judea. See also verse 26. ^dOr *the devil had already prompted Judas, the man from Kerioth (Simon’s son), to betray Jesus*. ^eSome manuscripts omit *except for his feet*. ^fIn the time of Jesus, people commonly reclined on couches as they ate. See also verses 23 and 28. ^gPs. 41:9 ^hLiterally, *you will believe that I am*. ⁱSome manuscripts read *So if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify the Son of Man in Himself*. ^jSome manuscripts omit “Lord.”

CHAPTER 14

Jesus Promises to Come Again

(1) “Don’t let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God, so believe in Me as well.^a (2) There are many dwelling places in My Father’s house. If there weren’t, I would have told you. For^b I am going there to prepare a place for you. (3) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you with Me to My home—so you can be where I am. (4) Now you know the way to the place I am going.”^c

Jesus—the Only Way to the Father

(5) Then Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we don’t know where You are going, so how can we know the way?” (6) Jesus answered him, “I am the Way—and the Truth and the Life! No one can come to the Father except through Me. (7) If you men have really come to know Me, you will know My Father as well.^d And from now on, you do know Him and have seen Him.”

Jesus and His Father

(8) Then Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be content.” (9) But Jesus replied, “Have you never known Me, Philip? I have been with all of you for such a long time! The person who has seen Me has seen the Father. So how can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’ (10) Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words I am speaking to you men are not My own. No, the Father Who is always present in Me is performing His works. (11) You must believe Me when I say that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me. Or at least believe because of the works themselves.

(12) Most truly I tell you, the person who believes in Me will perform the same works I am doing. In fact, he will perform even greater works than Mine, because I am going to the Father.^e (13) And I will do whatever you request in My name, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. (14) If you ask Me^f for anything in My name, I will do it!

Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit

(15) If you love Me, you will obey My commandments.^g (16) Then I will make a request to the Father, and He will give you another Advocate^h to be with you forever. (17) That Advocate is the Spirit of Truth. The world cannot receive Him because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He remains with you and will be in you.ⁱ (18) I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming back to you. (19) In a little while, the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me. And because I live, you too will live. (20) When that time comes, you will realize that I am in My Father, and you are in Me, and I am in you. (21) The

person who knows My commandments and obeys them is the one who loves Me. And the one who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will also love him and reveal Myself to him.”

(22) Then Judas^j (not the man from Kerioth^k) asked, “Lord, what has happened that You are planning to reveal Yourself to us and not to the world?” (23) Jesus answered him, “Anyone who loves Me will pay close attention to what I say. And My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. (24) But the person who does not love Me pays no attention to what I say. The message you are hearing is not Mine; it comes from the Father Who sent Me. (25) I have told you all this while I am still with you. (26) But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have told you.

(27) I am leaving you with peace. I am giving you My very own peace. I am not giving it to you the way the world gives it. So don’t let your hearts be troubled or afraid. (28) You have heard Me tell you that I am going away and coming back to you. If you loved Me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I am.^l (29) And now I have told you before it happens, so that when it does happen, you will believe.

(30) I won’t be speaking with you much longer because the world’s prince is approaching. He has nothing to lay hold of in Me,^m (31) but I want the world to know that I love the Father and do exactly as He commands. Now get up! Let’s be going!”ⁿ

^aOr *Believe in God; believe in Me as well.* ^b Some manuscripts omit *For.* ^c Some manuscripts read *Now you know where I am going, and you know the way.* ^d Some manuscripts read *If you men had really known Me, you would have known My Father as well.* ^e The following explanation seems probable: Jesus’ ministry was confined to a small country in the Middle East. But after His work was completed, He returned to His Father, and the Holy Spirit was poured out on His followers. Empowered by the Spirit, His followers began taking the good news of salvation to all the world. In this sense, their works have been greater than His. ^f Some manuscripts omit *Me.* ^g Some manuscripts read *If you love Me, obey My commandments!* Other manuscripts read *If you love Me and obey My commandments.* ^h The Greek word that has been translated *Advocate* in John 14-16 refers to the Holy Spirit. No single English word fully captures the meaning of this Greek word, and other English translations are possible: *Comforter, Counselor, Convincer, Helper, Friend,* etc. ⁱ Or *will be among you*—some manuscripts read *is in/among you.* ^j It seems that this *Judas* was also known as *Thaddaeus.* See Matt. 10:3 and Mark 3:18. ^k *Kerioth* was a town in southern Judea. ^l The following explanation seems probable: In His earthly existence as a human being, Jesus was inferior to the Father. However, in His divine nature, He is fully equal to the Father. See John 5:18. ^m Literally, *He has nothing in Me*—the following explanation seems probable: Jesus was the only Human Being to be born without original sin. Since His nature is sinless, Satan’s temptations found no answering passions within Him. ⁿ It seems probable that at this point, Jesus and His disciples left the room where they had just eaten the Passover and began making their way to the Garden of Gethsemane.

CHAPTER 15

The Vine and the Branches

(1) “I am the real Vine, and My Father is the Caretaker. (2) He removes every branch of Mine that bears no fruit, and He prunes^a every fruitful branch to make it bear more fruit. (3) Now you are already clean because of the message I have spoken to you. (4) Remain in union with Me, and I will remain in union with you. A branch cannot bear fruit by itself; it must remain in union with the vine. And in the same way, you cannot bear fruit unless you remain in union with Me.

(5) I am the Vine, and you are the branches. The person who remains in union with Me, and I with him bears abundant fruit. But apart from Me, you can do nothing. (6) Anyone who does not remain in union with Me is thrown away like a withered branch. Then people gather up the withered branches and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. (7) If you remain in union with Me and My words remain in you, you can ask for anything you desire, and you will get it. (8) You bring My Father glory when you bear abundant fruit and prove that you are My disciples.

(9) I have loved you in the same way My Father has loved Me. So remain in My love! (10) If you obey My commandments, you will remain in My love, just as I have obeyed My Father’s commandments and remain in His love. (11) I have told you these things so that My joy will be present among you^b and your joy will be complete.

(12) This is My commandment: You must love one another as I have loved you. (13) No one has greater love than the person who lays down his life for his friends. (14) And you are My friends if you do what I command. (15) I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not understand what his master is doing. Instead, I have called you friends, for I have revealed everything to you that I heard from My Father. (16) You did not choose Me; I chose you, and I commissioned you to go and bear lasting fruit. Then the Father will give you whatever you request in My name. (17) I am commanding these things so that you will love one another.

The World’s Hatred

(18) If the world hates you, bear in mind that it hated Me first. (19) If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. But since I have chosen you out of the world, you have nothing in common with it. And that is why the world hates you. (20) Remember what I told you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’^c If the people of the world persecuted Me, they will persecute you as well. And if they obeyed My word, they will obey yours also. (21) They will treat you this way because of Me, for they don’t know the One Who sent Me.

(22) If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no record of sin. But now they have no excuse for their sin. (23) The person who hates Me also hates My Father. (24) If I had not performed mighty works among them that no one else had done, they would have no record of sin. But now they have seen My works, and yet they have hated both Me and My Father. (25) However, the words in their law must be fulfilled: ‘They hated Me without any reason.’^d

(26) When the Advocate comes (the Spirit of Truth Who proceeds from the Father and Whom I will send you), He will testify about Me. (27) And you are also My witnesses, for you have been with Me from the outset.”

^aLiterally, *cleans* ^b Or *will be in you* ^c John 13:16 ^d Ps. 35:19; 69:4

CHAPTER 16

(1) “I have told you all this so you won’t stumble in your faith. (2) You will be expelled from the synagogues; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is serving God. (3) People will treat you this way because they have never known the Father or Me. (4) I have spoken to you about it, so that when the time comes for it to happen, you will remember that I warned you.

The Work of the Holy Spirit

I did not tell you these things at first because I was with you. (5) But now I am going to the One Who sent Me, and none of you even ask Me where I am going. (6) Yet your hearts are filled with grief because of what I have said to you. (7) Nevertheless, I am telling you the truth; it is better for you that I am going away. For if I don’t leave, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you. (8) And when He comes, He will prick the world’s conscience in regard to sin, righteousness, and judgment—(9) in regard to sin, because its people do not believe in Me, (10) in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, and you will no longer see Me, (11) and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world has already been condemned.

(12) I still have many things to tell you—more than you can deal with now. (13) But when the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you in the way of all truth. For He will not speak on His own; He will only tell you what He hears, and He will disclose things to come. (14) What is more, He will glorify Me, for He will take the truth that is Mine^a and proclaim it to you. (15) Everything the Father has belongs to Me, and this is why I told you that the Spirit will take the truth that is Mine and proclaim it to you.

You Will See Me Again

(16) In a little while, you will no longer see Me, and then in a little while, you will see Me again.”

(17) At this, some of Jesus’ disciples said to one another, “What does He mean by saying, ‘In a little while, you will not see Me, and then in a little while, you will see Me again,’ and ‘Because I am going to the Father?’” (18) And they kept repeating, “What is this ‘little while’?^b We don’t understand what He means.”

(19) Now Jesus was aware that they were about^c to ask Him a question. So He said to them, “Are you discussing what I meant when I said, ‘In a little while, you will not see Me, and then in a little while, you will see Me again’?” (20) Most truly I tell you, you will cry and wail, but the world will be glad. And although you will grieve, your grief will turn to joy. (21) When a woman is giving birth, she is grieved because her time of agony has come. But as soon as the baby is born, she forgets her distress because she is so glad that a human being^d has been born into the world. (22) And you are also experiencing grief, but I will see you again, and then you will rejoice with a joy that no one can ever take away from you. (23) And on that day, you won’t need to ask Me any more questions.

Most truly I tell you, if you ask the Father for anything, He will give it to you in My name.^e (24) So far, you have not asked for anything in My name. Ask and you will receive, and then your joy will be complete.

Victory over the World

(25) Although I have told you these things in figurative language, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language. Instead, I will tell you about the Father in plain words. (26) On that day, you will make your requests in My name. I am not saying that I will make your requests to the Father for you. (27) No, the Father Himself loves you because you have loved Me and have believed that I came from God.^f (28) I left the Father and came into the world, and now I am leaving the world and returning to the Father.”

(29) Then Jesus’ disciples said to Him, “At last, You are speaking plainly and not in figurative language. (30) Now we are certain that You know everything and do not need to be questioned. And this is why we believe You have come from God.”

(31) “So now you believe!”^g Jesus responded. (32) “But a time is coming—in fact, it has already come—when you will be scattered. Each of you will go his own way, and you will leave Me all alone. And yet I am not really alone, because the Father is with Me.

(33) I have told you these things so you will find peace in Me. In the world, you will have trouble. But cheer up! I have conquered the world!”

^aLiterally, *He will take what is Mine*—see also verse 15. ^b Some manuscripts read “*What is this ‘little while’ that He is talking about?*” ^c Some manuscripts read *they were wanting*. ^d The Greek term that has been translated *human being* is gender inclusive. ^e Some manuscripts read *if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you*. ^f Some manuscripts read *from the Father*. ^g Or “*So now you believe?*”

CHAPTER 17

Jesus Prays for Himself

(1) Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the time has come. Glorify Your Son, so the Son can glorify You. (2) For You have given Him authority over all humanity, so that He can give eternal life to everyone You have given Him. (3) And this is eternal life—to know You, the only real God, and Jesus Christ,^a Whom You have sent. (4) I have glorified You on the earth by finishing the work You gave Me to do. (5) So now, Father, glorify Me in Your presence with the glory I had with You before the world existed.

Jesus Prays for the Apostles

(6) I have revealed Your name to the men You gave Me out of the world. They were Your men; You gave them to Me, and they have obeyed Your word. (7) And now they realize that everything You have given Me comes from You. (8) For I gave them the message You gave Me, and they accepted it. They are certain that I came from You, and they believe You sent Me. (9) I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world, but for the men You have given Me, because they belong to You. (10) Yes, everything I have belongs to You, and what You have belongs to Me—and I have been glorified through them.

(11) I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, protect them through the power of Your name—the name You have given Me.^b Let them be one as We are one. (12) While I was with them, I always protected them through the power of Your name—that very name You have given Me.^c I guarded them, and none of them were lost except the son of destruction,^d so that the scripture would be fulfilled.^e

(13) Now I am coming to You, but I am saying these things while I am still in the world, so they can experience the full measure of My joy in their lives. (14) I have given them Your word, and the world hates them because they do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. (15) I am not asking You to take them out of the world, but to protect them from the evil one. (16) They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to it. (17) Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth. (18) In the same way that You sent Me into the world, I have

also sent them into the world. (19) And it is on their behalf that I devote Myself to Your holy work—so that they can be sanctified by the truth.

Jesus Prays for His Future Followers

(20) I am not praying for these men alone. I am also praying for the people who will believe in Me through their message. (21) May they all be one. Just as You, Father, are in Me, and I am in You, may they also be in Us,^f so the world will believe that You sent Me. (22) I have given them the same glory You have given Me, so they can be one, just as We are one. (23) With Me in them and You in Me, may they be so completely united that the world will know that You have sent Me, and that You have loved them just as You have loved Me.

(24) Father, I want the people You have given Me to be with Me where I am and to see My glory—the glory You gave Me because You loved Me before the creation of the world.

(25) Righteous Father, even though the world does not know You, I know You, and these men know that You sent Me. (26) I have revealed Your name to them, and I will continue to reveal it. Then the love You have for Me will be in them, and I will be in them.”

^aThe Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. ^bSome manuscripts read *protect those You have given Me through the power of Your name*. ^cSome manuscripts read *I always protected those You have given Me through the power of Your name*. ^dThis is a reference to Judas. ^ePs. 41:9; Jer. 32:6-9; Zech. 11:12-13 ^fSome manuscripts read *may they also be one in Us*.

CHAPTER 18

Jesus Is Arrested

(1) When He had finished this prayer, Jesus set out with His disciples for the other side of the winter stream^a called the Kidron, where they entered a garden. (2) Now Judas, His betrayer, was also familiar with the place, because Jesus and His disciples had often met there. (3) So Judas made his way to the garden with a detachment of Roman soldiers, along with some guards who were sent by the chief priests and the Pharisees. And they were equipped with lanterns, torches, and weapons.

(4) Then Jesus (Who was well aware of everything that was going to happen to Him) stepped forward and asked them, “Who are you looking for?” (5) “Jesus of Nazareth,” they answered. “I am He,”^b Jesus responded. Now Judas, His betrayer,

was standing there with them, (6) and when Jesus said, "I am He," they backed off and fell to the ground.

(7) Again Jesus asked them, "Who are you looking for?" "Jesus of Nazareth," they said. (8) "I told you that I am He," Jesus answered. "So if I'm the One you want, let these men go." (9) He said this to fulfill the statement He had made, "I lost none of those You gave Me."^c

(10) At this point, Simon Peter drew the sword he was wearing and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.)

(11) But Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword away! Am I never to drink the cup of suffering the Father has given Me?"

(12) Then the detachment of soldiers, along with its commander and the Jewish guards, arrested Jesus. And after they had tied Him up, (13) they led Him to Annas^d first, because Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. (14) This was the same Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be better for one Man to die instead of the people.^e

Peter's First Denial

(15) Meanwhile, Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. And because this disciple was an acquaintance of the high priest, he accompanied Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, (16) while Peter stood outside at the gate. So the other disciple who was the high priest's acquaintance went back and spoke to the female gatekeeper, who brought Peter inside.

(17) Then the servant girl who was on duty as gatekeeper asked Peter, "Aren't you also one of this Man's disciples?" "No, I'm not," he replied.

(18) Now it was cold, and the servants and the guards were standing around a charcoal fire they had made to keep warm. And Peter was standing there with them, warming Himself.

The Trial Before Annas

(19) Then the high priest started questioning Jesus about His disciples and His teaching. (20) "I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus answered him. "I have always taught in the synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews assemble, and I have said nothing in secret. (21) Why are you questioning Me? Ask the people who heard Me. They know what I said."

(22) At these words, one of the guards who was standing nearby gave Jesus a slap in the face and asked, "Is that the way to answer the high priest?" (23) "If I said anything wrong, produce some evidence of it," Jesus responded. "But if what I said was right, why are you hitting Me?"

(24) Then Annas sent Jesus, Who was still tied up, to Caiaphas, the high priest.

Peter's Second and Third Denials

(25) While Peter was standing by the fire warming himself, some people asked him, “Aren’t you also one of His disciples?” But he denied it. “No, I’m not,” he said.

(26) Then one of the high priest’s servants—a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off—spoke up and asked, “Didn’t I see you in the garden with Him?” (27) Again Peter denied it, and immediately, a rooster crowed.

The Trial before Pilate

(28) Now early in the morning, the Jews led Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor.^f But because they wanted to eat the Passover, they stayed outside the palace to avoid defilement.^g (29) So Pilate came out and asked them, “What charge are you bringing against this Man?” (30) “If He weren’t a criminal, we wouldn’t have handed Him over to you,” they replied.

(31) “Then take Him yourselves and try Him according to your own law,” Pilate told them. But the Jews answered him, “We aren’t allowed to put anyone to death.” (32) (This ensured the fulfillment of the statements Jesus had made that indicated the kind of death He was going to die.^h)

(33) With that, Pilate went back into the palace. And after he had summoned Jesus, he asked Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?” (34) “Is that your own question,” Jesus responded, “or did other people talk to you about Me?” (35) “Surely You don’t think I’m a Jew!” Pilate exclaimed. “Your own nation and the chief priests handed You over to me. What have You done?”

(36) “My kingdom does not belong to this world,” Jesus answered. “If My kingdom belonged to this world, My followers would be fighting to prevent Me from being handed over to the Jews. But at the present time, My kingdom does not belong here.”

(37) “You are a King then?” Pilate questioned. “Yes, I am a King,” Jesus replied, “although the term is yours. My work is to testify to the truth. This is why I was born. In fact, this is why I came into the world. Everyone on the side of truth keeps listening to Me.” (38) “What is truth?” Pilate asked.

With these words, he went out to the Jews again and told them, “I find nothing criminal in Him. (39) But you have a custom of asking me to release one prisoner for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release the King of the Jews for you?” (40) At this, they screamed back, “Not that Fellow! We want Barabbas!” Now Barabbas was a robber.

^aThe *Kidron* is a wadi—a seasonal stream that flows in arid regions. Jesus and His disciples crossed the Kidron on the Passover. By this time, the winter rains were over, and most of the water had drained out of the stream bed. ^b Literally, “*I am*,”—see also verses 6 and 8. ^c See John 17:12. ^d Annas had

served as high priest from A.D. 6 until the Romans deposed him in A.D. 15. But according to the law of Moses, the high priesthood was to be a lifelong office. Probably for this reason, Annas was still honored with the title of high priest, even though the Romans had installed Caiaphas as the official high priest. Both Annas and Caiaphas may have lived in the same palace complex. At the very least, Annas seems to have tried Jesus in Caiaphas' palace. ^c See John 11:50. ^f Literally, *to the Praetorium*—the word *Praetorium* appears a second time in verse 28 and again in verse 33. In both of these instances, it has been rendered *palace*. ^g The Jewish authorities believed they would be defiled if they entered the home of a Gentile. There seems to be a note of irony here. The leaders were so concerned about maintaining their ceremonial purity, and yet they were ready to kill the innocent Son of God. ^h The Romans did not permit Jewish courts to inflict capital punishment. So if Jesus was to be sentenced to death, He would have to endure a Roman execution. Jesus had predicted that He would be crucified, and crucifixion was a distinctly Roman practice.

CHAPTER 19

Jesus Is Crowned with Thorns

(1) So Pilate had Jesus taken away and flogged. (2) And after the soldiers had braided a crown of thorns, they placed it on His head and draped a purple robe around Him. (3) And they kept coming up to Him and saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” Then they started slapping Him in the face.

Pilate Sentences Jesus to Death

(4) Now once again, Pilate went out and said to the Jews, “See, I am bringing Him out to you—to let you know that I find nothing criminal in Him.” (5) So Jesus went outside, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. “Look at the Man!” Pilate exclaimed. (6) But as soon as the chief priests and the officials saw Him, they screamed, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” “You take Him and crucify Him,” Pilate told them. “I find nothing criminal in Him.”

(7) “We have a law,” the Jews objected. “And according to that law, He must die, because He claimed to be the Son of God.” (8) When Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. (9) So he went back into the palace^a and asked Jesus, “Where are You from?” But Jesus gave him no reply.

(10) “Aren’t You going to speak to me?” Pilate asked. “Don’t You realize that I have authority to release You or to crucify You?” (11) Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority at all over Me if it had not been given to you from above. And for this reason, the person^b who handed Me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.”

(12) From that very moment, Pilate kept trying to find a way to release Jesus. But the Jews screamed, “If you let this Fellow go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king is rebelling against Caesar.”

(13) When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat in a place called The Stone Pavement (or Gabbatha in Aramaic).

(14) It was about nine o’clock in the morning^c on the Preparation Day of Passover week,^d and Pilate said to the Jews, “Look at your King!” (15) “Away with Him! Away with Him! Crucify Him!” they screamed. “Should I crucify your King?” Pilate asked. “We have no king but Caesar!” the chief priests retorted.

(16) So in the end, Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified, and they took Him away.

The Crucifixion

(17) Then Jesus went out, carrying His cross, to the place called The Skull (or Golgotha in Aramaic), (18) where they crucified Him along with two others—one on each side, with Jesus in the middle.

(19) Now Pilate wrote up a notice and had it placed on the cross. It read:

“JESUS OF NAZARETH,
THE KING OF THE JEWS”

(20) And many of the Jews read this notice, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the notice was written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek. (21) The Jewish chief priests tried to tell Pilate, “Don’t write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that He claimed to be the King of the Jews.” (22) At this, Pilate responded, “What I have written, I have written.”

(23) When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took His clothes and separated them into four shares—one for each soldier. And they also took His undergarment, which was seamless; it was woven from top to bottom in one piece. (24) “Let’s not tear it,” they said to one another. “Let’s cast lots^e to find out who will get it.” This fulfilled the scripture:

“They divided My clothing among them,
and cast lots for My apparel.”^f

Jesus Provides for His Mother

While the soldiers were doing this, (25) Jesus’ mother, His mother’s sister, Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene^g were standing by His cross. (26) When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple He loved standing there together, He said to His mother, “Dear woman, look at your son.” (27) Then He said to the disciple, “Look at your mother.” And from that time on, the disciple took her into his home.

The Death of Jesus

(28) Later, Jesus realized that everything was completed. But in order to fulfill the scripture, He said, “I’m thirsty!”^h (29) Now a jar of wine vinegarⁱ was standing there, so the people soaked a sponge in it. Then they twisted the sponge around a sprig of hyssop^j and lifted it to Jesus’ lips.

(30) When Jesus had received the vinegar, He exclaimed, “It is finished!” And with that, He bowed His head and yielded up His life.

Jesus’ Side Is Pierced

(31) Now since it was Preparation Day, the Jews asked Pilate to have the men’s legs broken and the bodies removed. For the next day was a very special Sabbath,^k and they didn’t want the bodies to remain on the crosses. (32) So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus and then those of the other. (33) But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they didn’t break His legs. (34) Instead, one of the soldiers poked Jesus’ side with a lance, and immediately there was an outflow of blood and water.

(35) The man who saw this has recorded his testimony, and his testimony is genuine. He knows he is speaking the truth—so you can believe as well.^l (36) For this happened to fulfill the scripture:

“Not a bone of His will be broken.”^m

(37) And another scripture says:

“They will look on the One they have pierced.”ⁿ

Jesus Is Buried

(38) Afterward, Joseph of Arimathea^o (who had been a secret disciple of Jesus because he was afraid of the Jews) asked Pilate for permission to remove Jesus’ body. Then Pilate gave him permission, and Joseph went and got the body.

(39) Nicodemus also came along, bringing a mixture^p of myrrh and aloes that weighed about 100 pounds.^q (Nicodemus was the man who had once visited Jesus at night.^r) (40) So the two of them took Jesus’ body and wrapped it in linen graveclothes, along with the spices, according to Jewish burial custom.

(41) Now a garden was located in the place where Jesus was crucified, and in the garden was a new tomb where no one had ever been laid. (42) But because it was the Jewish Preparation Day and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus’ body there.

^aLiterally, *the Praetorium* ^b Jesus was probably referring to Caiaphas. ^c Literally, *about the third hour*—many manuscripts read *about the sixth hour (about noon)*.

However, according to several of the church fathers, this discrepancy arose when early copyists confused the Greek numerals for three and six. ^d Literally, *the Preparation of Passover*—*Preparation Day* is the Jewish term for Friday, the day before the Sabbath. See also verses 31 and 42. ^e *Lots* were small pebbles or sticks that were used in games of chance. ^f Ps. 22:18 (Septuagint) ^g Although the wording in this verse is ambiguous, it is extremely unlikely that Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Jesus' mother, Mary, were sisters who had the same name. Clearly, four different women are intended. ^h Ps. 69:21 ⁱ Roman soldiers often drank wine vinegar mixed with water, which was considered a refreshing beverage. ^j Although some textual scholars wish to substitute *javelin* for *sprig of hyssop*, the evidence for this alternate reading is extremely meager. Only one obscure manuscript from the eleventh century reads *javelin*. ^k This particular Sabbath was also the date for Passover. ^l John may be affirming Jesus' true humanity, which was being questioned by a group of false teachers known as Gnostics. ^m Ex. 12:46; Num. 9:12; Ps. 34:20 ⁿ Zech. 12:10 ^o *Arimathea* is a Greek transliteration of *Ramah*. However, there were several towns in Palestine named Ramah, and it is uncertain which one is intended. ^p Some manuscripts read *a package*. ^q Since the Roman pound weighed twelve ounces, this would equal 75 British pounds. ^r See John 3:1-21.

CHAPTER 20

The Empty Tomb

(1) Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and noticed that the stone had been removed from the entrance. (2) So she ran to tell Simon Peter and the other disciple—the one Jesus loved. “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb!” she cried, “and we don’t know where they have laid Him!” (3) At this, Peter and the other disciple set out for the tomb.

(4) Now both of them were running side by side, but the other disciple outran Peter and arrived at the tomb first. (5) Then he bent down and saw the linen graveclothes lying there, but he didn’t go in. (6) Afterward, Simon Peter came up behind him and went directly into the tomb. And he took note that the graveclothes were lying there, (7) and that the burial cloth, which had been around Jesus’ head, was not lying with the graveclothes, but was folded up in a place by itself.^a

(8) Finally, the other disciple who had arrived at the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed. (9) (They were still unaware of the scripture which made it clear that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) (10) Then the disciples returned home again.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

(11) Meanwhile, Mary had been standing outside the tomb crying. And as she

cried, she bent down to look into the tomb (12) and saw two angels dressed in white, sitting where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the feet. (13) "Dear woman," they asked her, "why are you crying?" "They have taken away my Lord," she answered, "and I don't know where they have laid Him."

(14) With these words, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she didn't realize it was Jesus. (15) "Dear woman," He asked her, "why are you crying? Who are you looking for?" "Sir," she replied, thinking He was the gardener, "if you are the one who carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will get Him."

(16) Then Jesus said to her, "Mary!" At this, she turned toward Him and exclaimed in Aramaic, "Rabbouni!" (which means "Teacher"). (17) "Don't cling to Me," Jesus told her. "For I have not ascended to the Father yet. But go to My brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God.'" (18) So Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the message that she had seen the Lord and that He had said these things to her.

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

(19) Now it was late on the first day of the week, and the disciples were cowering behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jews. Then Jesus came and stood among them. "Peace be with you," He said to them. (20) And after He had spoken to them, He showed them His hands and His side, and the disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord.

(21) Once again, Jesus said to them, "Peace be with you. As the Father sent Me, I am also sending you." (22) Then He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit! (23) If you forgive anyone's sins, they have already been forgiven, and if you retain anyone's sins, they have already been retained."

Jesus Appears to Thomas

(24) But Thomas, who was one of the twelve (and whose name means the Twin), was not with them when Jesus came. (25) So when the other disciples kept telling him that they had seen the Lord, he replied, "Unless I see the wounds in His hands and put my finger into them, and put my hand into His side, I will never believe it."

(26) A week^b later, Jesus' disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Now even though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." (27) Then He spoke to Thomas, "Put your finger here and look at My hands; then reach out your hand and put it into My side. Don't continue doubting. Just believe!"

(28) At this, Thomas answered Him, "My Lord and my God!" (29) "You have

believed because you have seen Me,” Jesus told him. “How blessed^c are those who have not seen Me and yet have believed.”

Why This Book Was Written

(30) Jesus performed many other miraculous signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this book. (31) But these have been recorded so that you can believe that Jesus is the Christ,^d the Son of God, and that through believing, you can have life in His name.

^aIf Jesus’ enemies had removed His body from the tomb, they would have carelessly scattered the graveclothes. The fact that the linens were neatly folded suggested to Peter that Jesus was alive. ^bLiterally, *Eight days*—since the Jews reckoned days inclusively, this would have been the Sunday after the first Easter. ^cOr *happy* ^dThe Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*.

CHAPTER 21

Jesus Appears to Seven Disciples

(1) Some time later, Jesus appeared again to the disciples by the Lake of Tiberias.^a This is how it happened: (2) Simon Peter, Thomas (whose name means the Twin), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. (3) Then Simon Peter said to them, “I’m going fishing.” “We’ll come along too,” they replied. So they all set out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

(4) At daybreak, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples didn’t realize it was Jesus. (5) Then He called out to them, “You haven’t caught any fish to eat, have you, boys?” “No, we haven’t,” they answered. (6) “Well throw out your net on the right,” He told them, “and you’ll find some!” And when they did, they were unable to haul the net in because it contained such a large number of fish.

(7) At this, the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” Now as soon as Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he wrapped his outer robe around him (for he was naked underneath it) and jumped into the lake. (8) And the other disciples came along in the boat, pulling the net full of fish, for they were only about 300 feet^b from land.

Breakfast with Jesus

(9) When they came ashore, they saw a charcoal fire with fish lying on it, and

there was bread. (10) Then Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you just caught.” (11) So Simon Peter got into the boat and dragged the net to land. It was full of large fish—153 in all. But even though there were so many, the net was not torn. (12) “Come, have breakfast!” Jesus suggested. Now none of the disciples had the courage to inquire, “Who are You?” For they knew it was the Lord. (13) Then Jesus went and got the bread and served it to them, along with the fish.

(14) This was the third time Jesus appeared to the disciples after He was raised from the dead.

Peter Reaffirms Jesus

(15) When they had finished breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John,^c do you love^d Me more than they do?”^e “Yes, Lord,” he answered, “You know I love You.” “Then feed My lambs,” Jesus told him.

(16) Again, Jesus asked him, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” “Yes, Lord,” he answered, “You know I love You.” “Then tend My sheep,” Jesus told him.

(17) For a third time, Jesus asked him, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” Now Peter was grieved because Jesus had asked him a third time, “Do you love Me?”^f “Lord, You know everything,” Peter answered. “You know I love You.” “Then feed My sheep,” Jesus told him.

(18) “Most truly I tell you, when you were younger, you used to tie your belt around you and go wherever you desired. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will tie you up and take you where you have no desire to go.”

(19) In saying this, Jesus was indicating the kind of death Peter would die to glorify God.^g Then Jesus added, “Follow Me!”

Peter Inquires about John's Fate

(20) At this point, Peter turned around and noticed that the disciple Jesus loved was behind them. (He was the disciple who had leaned against Jesus' chest at supper and had asked, “Lord, who is going to betray You?”) (21) So when Peter saw this disciple, he questioned Jesus, “Lord, what will happen to him?” (22) Jesus replied, “Suppose I want him to survive until I come, what is that to you? You need to follow Me.”

(23) Now Jesus' statement gave rise to a rumor among the brothers that this disciple was not going to die. But Jesus never told Peter that he wasn't going to die. He only said, “Suppose I want him to survive until I come, what is that to you?”^h

(24) He is the disciple who is testifying about these things and who wrote them down. And we know that his testimony is true.

Conclusion

(25) Now there are also many other things that Jesus did, and I suppose if every one of them were recorded, the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

^aDuring Jesus' ministry, this body of water was known as the Lake of Galilee. However, the town of Tiberias had been founded on its shore just a few years before Jesus began His ministry, and by the time John wrote his Gospel, the name of the town had been transferred to the lake. ^bLiterally, *200 cubits*—one standard cubit equals approximately 18 inches. ^cSome manuscripts read *Jonah*, *John* is the Greek form of *Jonah*. ^dIn verses 15-17, John uses two different Greek words for love. In classical Greek usage, one of these words denotes total good will toward another person, while the other word denotes love between friends or siblings. Although this distinction may have been intended by John, it seems more likely that he was simply employing a variation in style. ^e*Or do you love Me more than anything else?* ^fPeter had denied Jesus three times, and now he was being asked to reaffirm his love for Jesus three times. It seems that Jesus' third question grieved Peter because it reminded him of his shameful threefold denial. ^gThis was probably a veiled prophecy that Peter would be crucified. ^hSome manuscripts simply read "*Suppose I want him to survive until I come?*"

APPENDIX

The Woman Caught in Adultery

(John 7:53-8:11)

(53) Then each of them went to his own home, (1) while Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. (2) But at the break of day, Jesus arrived in the temple again, and He sat down and began to teach all the people who were coming to Him. (3) Meanwhile, the scribes and the Pharisees brought in a woman who had been caught in adultery^a and made her stand in the middle of the group.

(4) "Teacher," they said, "this woman has been caught red-handed committing adultery. (5) Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone women like this. But what do You have to say?" (6) (They were posing this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for a legal charge against Him.)^b

At this, Jesus stooped down and started writing on the ground with His finger. (7) But when they kept pressing their question, He stood up straight and said to them, "Let the person who is sinless among you be the first to throw a stone at her." (8) And with that, He stooped down again and continued writing on the ground.^c (9) Now when they heard this, they began to slip away one by one,^d starting

with the oldest, until Jesus was left all alone with the woman. (10) Then Jesus stood up straight and asked her, “Dear woman, where are they? Hasn’t anyone condemned you?” (11) “No one, Sir,” she answered. “Well I don’t condemn you either,” Jesus responded. “Go on home, and from this time forward, don’t make a practice of sinning anymore.”

The best Greek manuscripts do not contain John 7:53-8:11. The following endnotes are based on a comparison of the manuscripts which do contain this passage. ^a Some manuscripts read *caught in sin*. ^b Some manuscripts omit verse 6. ^c Some manuscripts read *He stooped down again and continued writing the sins of each of them on the ground*. ^d Some manuscripts read *Now when they heard this, they were convinced by their consciences and began to slip away one by one*. ^e Some manuscripts read *where are your accusers?*

STUDY GUIDE

- (1) Is Jesus, the Word, really God? (*John 1:1; 20:28*)
- (2) Are Jesus and His Father distinct Persons within the divine essence? (*John 1:1*)
- (3) Did Jesus play an active role in the work of creation? (*John 1:3, 10*)
- (4) Is Jesus really a flesh-and-blood Human Being? (*John 1:14*)
- (5) Jesus equated John the Baptist with Elijah. So why did John deny being Elijah? (*Matt. 11:13-15; John 1:19-21*)
- (6) Why did John the Baptist refer to Jesus as the Lamb of God? What is the significance of this terminology? (*John 1:29, 35-36*)
- (7) Do you think there was any spiritual significance in Jesus’ miracle at Cana? (*John 2:1-11*)
- (8) What was Jesus talking about when He spoke of the new birth? (*John 3:1-8*)
- (9) John 3:16 is undoubtedly the most famous verse in the Bible. Why is this verse so important?
- (10) What lessons can we learn about Christian witnessing from the way Jesus related to the woman of Sychar? (*John 4:1-42*)
- (11) Are Jesus and His Father equal, or is the Father greater than Jesus? (*John 5:18; 14:28*)

- (12) How can we be saved? Do you think salvation is easy or difficult? (*John 6:28-29, 40, 47*)
- (13) What did Jesus mean when He told the people that they must gnaw on His flesh and drink His blood? Do you think He was trying to shock them? Why? (*John 6:47-58, 63*)
- (14) What is so special about the term I AM? Why did Jesus' enemies want to stone Him when He applied this term to Himself? (*Ex. 3:13-14; John 8:58-59*)
- (15) Did God the Father require His Son to die, or did Jesus die voluntarily? Could both be true? (*John 10:17-18*)
- (16) The resurrection of Lazarus is often regarded as Jesus' greatest miracle. Why was this miracle so significant? Why did it make the chief priests and the Pharisees so angry? (*John 11:1-54*)
- (17) The story of a woman who anointed Jesus with perfume is found in all four Gospels, but only John identifies the woman as Mary of Bethany. Why do you think John alone provides us with her name? (*John 12:1-3*)
- (18) What was Jesus trying to teach His disciples when He washed their feet? What does this story teach us? (*John 13:1-17*)
- (19) John tells us that "it was night" when Judas left supper to betray Jesus. Does this statement have a deeper, spiritual meaning? (*John 13:30*)
- (20) How did Philip demonstrate a lack of understanding when he asked to see the Father? (*John 14:8-11*)
- (21) What does it mean to remain in union with Jesus? (*John 15:1-8*)
- (22) There has often been controversy among Christians as to whether people who have never heard about Jesus can be saved. Do you think John 15:22 has any bearing on this question?
- (23) What did Jesus mean when He said that the Holy Spirit would prick the world's conscience in regard to sin, righteousness, and judgment? (*John 16:8-11*)
- (24) How does it make you feel to realize that Jesus was praying for you on the night He was betrayed? (*John 17:20-26*)
- (25) Do you think Pilate was sincere when he asked, "What is truth?" (*John 18:38*)
- (26) Why did Pilate have Jesus flogged after he had just pronounced Him innocent? (*John 18:38-19:1*)

(27) Why do you think the risen Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene before He appeared to anyone else? (*John 20:11-18*)

(28) Why did Jesus tell Mary Magdalene not to cling to Him? What did He mean when He told her that He had not ascended to the Father yet? Do you think He made a quick ascension to His Father on Easter morning? (*John 20:17*)

(29) What do you think it was like to have breakfast with Someone Who had been dead and in the grave just a few weeks before? (*John 21:9-13*)

Acts

CHAPTER 1

To Theophilus

(1) In my first account,^a Theophilus, I dealt with everything Jesus did and taught from the beginning of His ministry (2) until the day He was taken up to heaven, after He had given instructions to His chosen apostles through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit

(3) Now after His suffering, Jesus presented Himself to the apostles and gave them many decisive proofs that He was alive. For He kept appearing to them and telling them about the kingdom of God until 40 days had gone by. (4) And while He was eating with them,^b He instructed them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the Gift the Father had promised. “You have heard Me speak about this Gift,” He declared. (5) “For John baptized with^c water, but in a few days, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

(6) So when the apostles had gathered together, they started asking Him, “Lord, is this the time You are going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” (7) “It is not for you to know the times or seasons the Father has set by His own authority,” Jesus responded. (8) “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the most distant parts of the earth.”

Jesus Ascends to Heaven

(9) Now after He had said this, He was lifted up before their very eyes, and a cloud removed Him from their sight. (10) And as He was ascending, and as they were gazing intently into the sky, two men in white clothing suddenly stood beside them. (11) “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why are you standing here looking up into the sky? This Jesus Who was taken up from you into heaven will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven.”

The Believers Begin to Pray

(12) Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, which is near the city. (It is a Sabbath day’s walk^d away.) (13) And as soon as they arrived in town, they went to the upper room^e where they were staying. The apostles who were present included Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew^f and Matthew,^g James, the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot,^h and Judas,ⁱ the son of James. (14) All of them had one purpose in mind as they devoted themselves constantly to prayer, along with the women, including Jesus’ mother Mary,^j and His brothers.

A New Apostle Is Chosen

(15) About that time, Peter stood up among the believers (who were approximately 120 in number) and said, (16) “Brothers, there is a scripture that had to be fulfilled.^k The Holy Spirit prophesied through David about the fate of Judas, who served as a guide for the men who arrested Jesus. (17) Judas was counted as one of us and was chosen to share in our ministry.”

(18) (This Judas acquired a plot of land with the money he had received for his wickedness, and after his body became swollen,^l he burst open in the middle, and all his intestines gushed out. (19) Now since these events were common knowledge to everyone living in Jerusalem, they called that plot of land “Hakeldama”^m in their own language, which means “Field of Blood.”)ⁿ

(20) “This is why it is written in the book of Psalms:

‘Let his residence be deserted;
let there be no one to live in it,’^o

and

‘Let another person take his position.’^p

(21) Therefore, we must choose one of the men who were in our group the entire time the Lord Jesus was associated with us—(22) from John’s baptism until the day He was taken up from us. One of these men must join us as a witness to His resurrection.”

(23) So the believers nominated two candidates—Joseph, who was known as Barsabbas^q (with the added name of Justus^r), and Matthias. (24) Then they prayed, “Lord, You know everyone’s heart. Show us which of these two You have chosen (25) to take the place of Judas in this apostolic ministry, which he abandoned to go where he belonged.” (26) Then they cast lots,^s and when the lot fell on Matthias, he was chosen to serve as an apostle with the eleven.

^aLuke’s first account is his Gospel. ^b Or *while He was staying with them, or when they came together*. ^c Or *in*—this applies to each use of *with* in verse 5. ^d According to rabbinic law, Jews were forbidden to walk more than two thousand cubits (about three thousand feet) on the Sabbath. ^e This may well have been the same upper room where Jesus and His disciples celebrated the Passover before His crucifixion. ^f *Bartholomew* means *son of Talmi*. His personal name was probably *Nathanael*. See John 1:45-51. ^g It seems that *Matthew* was also known as *Levi*. Compare Matt. 9:9-13 with Mark 2:14-17 and Luke 5:27-32. ^h The *Zealots* were an extremist political group that called for violent rebellion against Rome. ⁱ It seems that this *Judas* was also known as *Thaddaeus*. See Matt. 10:3 and Mark 3:18. ^j This is the last time Jesus’ mother Mary is mentioned in the New Testament. ^k Peter may have had Ps. 41:9 in mind. ^l Or *and falling flat on*

his face, ^m *Hakeldama* is an Aramaic expression that means *The Field of Blood*. ⁿ Verses 18-19 appear to be a parenthetical statement that Luke inserted to provide further information about Judas. ^o Ps. 69:25 ^pPs. 109:8 ^q *Barsabbas* appears to be an Aramaic term that means *Son of the Sabbath*. This probably indicates that Joseph was born on a Sabbath. ^r Like many first century Jews, Joseph was also given a Gentile name. *Justus* was a common Roman name at the time. ^s *Lots* were small pebbles or sticks that were used in games of chance or to make decisions.

CHAPTER 2

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

(1) When the day of Pentecost^a arrived, all the believers were together in one place. (2) Suddenly, a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from the sky and filled the entire house where they were sitting. (3) Then they saw tongues that looked like fire spreading out and coming to rest on each of them. (4) And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

(5) Now devout Jews from every nation of the world were staying in Jerusalem, (6) and when this sound reached their ears, they crowded together in bewilderment. For they heard the believers speaking in their own languages. (7) “Aren’t all these people who are speaking Galileans?” they asked in wonder and amazement. (8) “Then how is it that we hear them in our own native languages? (9) We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites. We are residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, (10) Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and the regions of Libya near Cyrene. We are visitors from Rome, (11) both Jews and converts to the Jewish faith. We are Cretans and Arabs. And yet we hear them speaking about God’s mighty deeds in our own languages!”

(12) So they were all amazed and perplexed. “What can this mean?” they kept asking one another. (13) But there were others who were making a joke of what had happened. “They’re full of sweet wine!”^b they kept sneering.

Peter Speaks to the People

(14) Then Peter stood up with the eleven and addressed the crowd in a loud voice: “Men of Judea and all of you who are staying in Jerusalem, you need to understand something. So hear me out. (15) These people are not drunk, as you assume. Why it’s only nine in the morning!^c (16) No, this is the event that the prophet Joel spoke about:

(17) “‘In the last days,’ says God,

“I will pour out My Spirit on all of humanity.^d

Your sons and daughters will prophesy.

Your young men will see visions,

and your old men will have dreams.

(18) In those days, I will even pour out My Spirit

on My servants, both men and women,

and they will prophesy.

(19) I will work wonders in the sky above,

and miraculous signs on the earth below—

blood and fire and misty smoke.

(20) The sun will be turned into darkness

and the moon into blood,

before the coming

of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

(21) And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord

will be saved.”^e

(22) Men of Israel, listen to me. Jesus of Nazareth was a Man Who was commended to you by God. He was commended by the miracles, wonders, and signs that God performed through Him while He was among you, as you yourselves know. (23) It was God’s definite plan and intention that Jesus be given into your hands, and with the help of lawless men, you nailed Him to a cross and killed Him. (24) But God freed Him from the agony of death and raised Him up, since it was impossible for death to keep Him in its grip.

(25) Consider these words from David that describe Him:

‘I have always seen the Lord before Me.

With Him at My right hand,

I cannot be shaken.

(26) This is why My heart is glad,

and My tongue is overjoyed.

Yes, even My body^f will live in hope.

(27) For You will not leave Me in the grave,

nor will You let Your Holy One experience decay.

(28) You have revealed the ways of life to Me,

and You will fill Me with gladness in Your presence.”^g

(29) Brothers, I can tell you with confidence that the patriarch David died and was buried, and to this day, his tomb is here with us. (30) But he was a prophet, and he knew that God had sworn an oath to place One of his descendants on his throne. (31) This is why he could speak with foreknowledge about the resurrection of the Christ^h—that He would not be left in the grave, nor would His body experience decay.

(32) God has resurrected this Jesus, and we are all witnesses of the fact! (33) He has been exalted to the right hand of God, and because He has received the promised Holy Spirit from the Father, He has poured out everything you are

seeing and hearing. (34) For David did not ascend to heaven, but he spoke these words:

“The Lord said to my Lord,
“Sit at My right hand,
(35) until I make Your enemies
a footstool for Your feet.””ⁱ

(36) Therefore, let all the Israelis know for certain that God has made this Jesus, Whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

Three Thousand People Respond

(37) When the people heard this, they were pierced to the heart. “Brothers, what should we do?” they asked Peter and the other apostles. (38) Peter responded, “Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then your sins will be forgiven, and you will receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit. (39) The promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far away. It belongs to as many people as the Lord our God may call to Himself.”

(40) And with many other words, Peter presented his case. “Save yourselves from this crooked generation!” he kept imploring them. (41) So those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand people were added to the number of believers that day.

Life among the Believers

(42) The believers kept devoting themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread,^j and to prayers. (43) Everyone was feeling a sense of awe, and the apostles were performing many wonders and miraculous signs. (44) All the believers were united together in close fellowship, and they began the practice of holding everything in common. (45) They would sell their property and possessions, and divide up the money with those in need. (46) Day by day, they had one purpose in mind as they kept devoting themselves to their meetings in the temple and to breaking bread in their homes. So they continued sharing their food with glad and generous hearts, (47) praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And day by day, the Lord kept adding those who were being saved to their number.

^a*Pentecost* is also known as the Festival of Weeks. It comes in late spring or early summer, on the fiftieth day after Passover. ^b The term *sweet wine* may refer to partially fermented grape juice, which can produce intoxication when consumed in large quantities. However, it has also been suggested that *sweet wine* was a fully fermented, intoxicating wine that was flavored with honey. ^c Literally, *the third hour of the day!* ^d Literally, *on all flesh*. ^e Joel 2:28-32 ^f Literally, *My flesh* ^g Ps. 16:8-11 (Septuagint) ^h The Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. See

also verses 36 and 38. ⁱ Ps. 110:1 (Septuagint) ^j This expression can refer to an ordinary meal or to the Lord's Supper. See also verse 46.

CHAPTER 3

A Lame Beggar Is Healed

(1) On one occasion, Peter and John were going up to the temple for the hour of prayer at three in the afternoon.^a (2) Meanwhile, a man who had been lame from birth was being carried up by some friends who made it their daily practice to lay him at the temple entrance that was called the Beautiful Gate. They laid him there so he could beg for charitable contributions from the people who were entering the temple. (3) And as soon as the man saw that Peter and John were about to go in, he asked them for a contribution.

(4) At this, the two apostles gazed intently at him. "Look at us!" Peter exclaimed. (5) Now the man was watching them closely, because he was expecting to get some money from them. (6) "I don't have any silver or gold," Peter told him. "But I am giving you what I do have. In the name of Jesus Christ^b of Nazareth—Walk!"^c (7) With that, Peter took the man by the right hand and helped him up. And immediately, his feet and ankles became strong, (8) and he sprang to his feet and began to walk. Then he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.

(9) Now all the people saw him walking and praising God, (10) and it gradually dawned on them that this was the same man who used to sit and beg for charitable contributions at the Beautiful Gate of the temple. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

Peter Speaks to the People Again

(11) While the man was clinging to Peter and John, all the people were overwhelmed with wonder, and they ran to meet them and congregated in the section of the temple known as Solomon's Colonnade. (12) Now Peter saw what was happening, and he met the people with these words: "Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why are you staring at us as if we made this man walk by some power or piety of our own? (13) The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God of our ancestors^d—has glorified His Servant Jesus. You handed Him over to death and denied Him before Pilate, even though Pilate had decided to release Him. (14) Yes, you denied the Holy and Righteous One,^e and you asked to have a murderer given to you. (15) You killed the Source^f of life, but God raised Him from the dead, and we are witnesses of this. (16) It was through faith in the name

of Jesus that this man whom you see and know gained his strength. In fact, the faith that comes through Jesus has provided him with total healing in front of all of you.

(17) Now, brothers, I realize that like your leaders, you acted in ignorance. (18) But this was God’s way of fulfilling what He had predicted through all the prophets—that His Christ would suffer. (19) Therefore, repent and turn to Him, so your sins can be blotted out. (20) Then seasons of refreshing will come from the presence of the Lord, and He will send Jesus, Who has been appointed as your Christ.^g (21) He must remain in heaven until the time of universal restoration, which, from the earliest ages, God has promised through His holy prophets. (22) For Moses put it this way:

‘The Lord your^h God will raise up a Prophet for you,
 from among your own people.
 He will be like me,
 and you must listen to everything He tells you.ⁱ
 (23) In fact, any person who does not listen to Him
 will be completely rooted out
 from among the people.’^j

(24) Yes, from Samuel on, all the prophets who have spoken have predicted this present time. (25) And you are the heirs^k of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your^l ancestors when He said to Abraham:

‘Through your Descendant,^m
 all the families of the earth will be blessed.’ⁿ

(26) Now when God raised up His Servant Jesus, He sent Him to you first—to bless you by turning each of you from your evil ways.”

^aLiterally, *the hour of prayer—the ninth hour*. ^bThe Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. See also verses 18 and 20. ^cSome manuscripts read *Get up and walk!*” ^dOr *fathers*—see also verse 25. ^e*The Righteous One* is a Messianic title that refers to Jesus. ^fOr *Author* or *Prince* ^gPeter seems to be suggesting that if the entire nation of Israel would only repent and turn to Jesus, He would come again very quickly. ^hSome manuscripts read *our*. ⁱDeut. 18:15 ^jLev. 23:29; Deut. 18:19 ^kLiterally, *sons or descendants* ^lSome manuscripts read *our*. ^mLiterally, *Seed*, ⁿGen. 22:18; 26:4

CHAPTER 4

Peter and John Are Arrested

(1) While Peter and John were speaking to the people, the priests,^a the commander of the temple guards, and the Sadducees confronted them. (2) These men were greatly disturbed because Peter and John were teaching the people and proclaiming that the resurrection of the dead had taken place in Jesus.^b (3) So they arrested the two apostles, and because it was already evening, they put them in custody for the night. (4) But many of the people who had listened to their message became believers, and the number of men grew to about five thousand.

The Sanhedrin Warns Peter and John

(5) When morning came, the Jewish leaders, elders, and scribes convened in Jerusalem, (6) along with Annas the high priest,^c Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and the rest of the high-priestly family. (7) And after they had the apostles brought before them, they began their inquiry. “By what power or name did you accomplish this?” they asked.

(8) Then Peter, who was filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Leaders and elders of the people! (9) If we are being cross-examined today because of an act of kindness that was shown to a crippled man, or if you want to know how he was healed, (10) you and all the people of Israel should realize that this man stands whole before you because of the name of Jesus Christ^d of Nazareth, Whom you crucified, but God raised from the dead. (11) This Jesus is—

‘the Stone that was rejected by you builders,
the One that has become the main Cornerstone.’^e

(12) There is no salvation in anyone else. For no other name under heaven has been given to human beings^f by which we must be saved.”

(13) Now the leaders kept noticing how boldly Peter and John were speaking, and when they grasped the fact that these were ordinary men with no rabbinic training, they were amazed and realized that they had been with Jesus. (14) What is more, they were unable to say anything against them, because the man who had been healed was standing there with them in full view.

(15) So after they had ordered the apostles to leave the Sanhedrin,^g they began conferring with one another. (16) “What should we do with these men?” they kept asking. “It is plain to everyone living in Jerusalem that they have performed an extraordinary miracle, and we cannot deny it. (17) However, to keep this matter from spreading further among the people, we must warn them never to speak to anyone in this name again.”

(18) Then they summoned the apostles and commanded them to totally refrain from speaking or teaching in the name of Jesus. (19) But Peter and John replied, “You must decide whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to Him. (20) For we cannot stop speaking about the things we have seen and heard.”

(21) With that, the leaders warned them again and let them go. There was no way they could punish them, because all the people were praising God on account of what had happened. (22) For the man who had been miraculously healed was over 40 years old.

The Believers Begin to Pray Again

(23) Now as soon as they were released, Peter and John went back to their friends and gave them a report about the things the chief priests and elders had said to them. (24) And when the people heard their report, they lifted up their voices together in prayer to God. “Master,” they said, “You Who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, (25) You spoke these words by the Holy Spirit through Your servant, our ancestor^h David:

‘Why do the nations rage,
and the people hatch their empty plots?
(26) The kings of the earth take their stand,
and the rulers form an alliance against the Lord,
and against His Christ.’ⁱ

(27) It is true that in this city, both Herod^j and Pontius Pilate formed an alliance with the Gentiles and the people of Israel against Your holy Servant Jesus, Whom You anointed. (28) In doing this, they accomplished everything that Your power and plan had decided beforehand should happen. (29) Now, Lord, pay attention to their threats, and give Your servants the ability to speak Your message with great boldness. (30) Stretch out Your hand to heal and to perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.”

(31) When they had finished praying, the place where they were meeting was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. So they continued speaking God’s message with boldness.

The Believers Share Their Possessions

(32) Now all the believers were united in heart and mind, and no one claimed any of his possessions as his own. Instead, they held everything in common. (33) With great power, the apostles continued to testify that the Lord Jesus had risen from the dead, and abundant grace rested on all of them. (34) Moreover, there were no poor people among the believers, because those who owned houses or lands kept selling their possessions, and afterward, they brought the money from these sales (35) and laid it at the apostles’ feet. Then it was distributed to anyone who needed it.

(36) For example, there was Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles named Barnabas,^k which means “Son of Encouragement.” (37) He sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.

^aSome manuscripts read *the chief priests*. ^b Literally, *proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead*. ^c Annas had served as high priest from A.D. 6 until the Romans deposed him in A.D. 15. But according to the law of Moses, the high priesthood was to be a lifelong office. Probably for this reason, Annas was still honored with the title of high priest, even though the Romans had installed Caiaphas as the official high priest. ^d The Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. See also verse 26. ^e Ps. 118:22 ^f The Greek term that has been translated *human beings* is gender inclusive. ^g The Great Sanhedrin (or Great Council) functioned as the highest Jewish court. ^h Or *father* ⁱ Ps. 2:1-2 ^j This was Herod Antipas. He was one of the sons of Herod the Great, who was ruling when Jesus was born. ^k Although *Barnabas* is clearly Aramaic, the Aramaic words that form this name are uncertain.

CHAPTER 5

Ananias and Sapphira

(1) However, a man named Ananias and his wife Sapphira also sold some property. (2) And with the full knowledge of his wife, he put aside a portion of the money for himself, but brought the rest and laid it at the apostles’ feet.

(3) Then Peter spoke up. “Ananias,” he asked, “how is it that Satan has dared you^a to lie to the Holy Spirit and put aside some of the money you received for the land? (4) Didn’t the land belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money under your control? Why would you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to human beings;^b you have lied to God.”

(5) When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and died, and great awe came over everyone who heard about it. (6) Then the young men got up and wrapped his body, and they carried him out and buried him.

(7) Now after a period of about three hours, his wife came in without knowing what had happened. (8) “Tell me,” Peter asked her, “did you and Ananias sell the land for this price?” “Yes,” she answered, “that was the price.” (9) “How could the two of you agree to put the Lord’s Spirit to the test?” Peter asked. “Look! The men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out too!”

(10) At this, she instantly fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in, and when they found her dead, they carried her out and buried her next to her husband. (11) So great awe came over the entire church and over everyone

else who heard about these events.

Miraculous Signs and Wonders

(12) What is more, the apostles were performing many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And by common consent, all the believers used to meet in Solomon's Colonnade. (13) No one else had the courage to join them, although the people continued to hold them in high regard. (14) And an ever-increasing multitude of men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.

(15) Now because of what the apostles were doing, the people kept bringing their sick into the streets and laying them on cots and mats, so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. (16) And even from the towns around Jerusalem, crowds kept gathering, bringing their sick and those who were troubled by evil spirits, and all of them were healed.

The Trial before the Sanhedrin

(17) Meanwhile, the high priest and all his associates from the party of the Sadducees were aroused and filled with jealousy. (18) So they arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. (19) But during the night, an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and led them out. Then the angel said to them, (20) "Go, stand in the temple, and continue telling the people all about this new^c life." (21) So after they heard this, they entered the temple about dawn and began teaching.

Now when the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin^d (the entire Israeli council of elders) and sent word to the jail to have the apostles brought before them. (22) But when the officers went to the jail, they couldn't find the apostles. So they returned with the following report: (23) "We found the jail securely locked, with the guards standing at the doors. However, when we opened the doors, there was no one inside."

(24) Now as the commander of the temple guards and the chief priests listened to these words, they began to feel great perplexity about the outcome of all this. (25) Then someone arrived with another report: "The men you put in jail are standing in the temple teaching the people." (26) With that, the commander set out with his officers and brought the apostles back. But the officers avoided the use of force, because they were afraid the people would stone them.

(27) So they brought the apostles in and had them stand before the Sanhedrin, and the high priest questioned them. (28) "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,"^e he said. "But you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you are determined to make us answer for this Man's blood."

(29) Then Peter and the other apostles replied, "We must obey God rather than

human beings. (30) The God of our ancestors^f raised Jesus from the dead after you murdered Him by hanging Him on a tree. (31) God exalted this Man to His own right hand as Ruler^g and Savior, so He could provide Israel with repentance and forgiveness of sins. (32) And we are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, Who is God's Gift to those who obey Him.”

(33) Now when the Jewish leaders heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they started making plans to put the apostles to death. (34) But a Pharisee named Gamaliel^h (a teacher of the law who was respected by all the people) stood up in the Sanhedrin and directed that the apostles be put outside for a little while. (35) Then he said to the leaders, “Men of Israel, be careful in deciding what to do with these people. (36) For in days gone by, Theudasⁱ appeared, claiming to be someone important, and about 400 men joined him. But he was killed; his movement was disbanded, and it all came to nothing. (37) Afterward, Judas the Galilean^j appeared at the time of the census and led some people in a revolt. But he also perished, and all his followers were scattered.

(38) So in the present case, I am advising you to steer clear of these people and leave them alone. If what they are planning or doing is of human origin, it will be defeated. (39) But if it comes from God, you will not be able to defeat them, and you even run the risk of fighting against God.”

Now because his words were persuasive, (40) they called the apostles in and had them beaten. And after they had ordered them to refrain from speaking in the name of Jesus, they let them go. (41) So the apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering dishonor for that name. (42) And every day in the temple and from house to house, they continued teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.^k

Literally, *Satan has filled your heart*—the Semitic expression *to fill the heart* means *to dare*. ^b The Greek term that has been translated *human beings/people* in verses 4, 29, 35, and 38 is gender inclusive. ^c Although the word *new* does not appear in the original text, it is implied. ^d The Great Sanhedrin (or Great Council) functioned as the highest Jewish court. See also verses 27, 34, and 41. ^e See Acts 4:18. ^f Or *fathers* ^g Or *Leader* or *Prince* ^h Rabban Gamaliel the Elder was the leader of the school of Hillel and is still regarded as one of the greatest of the ancient rabbis. ⁱ Although this is the only record of his name, Theudas may have been one of the rebels who appeared when Herod the Great died. ^j Judas of Galilee led a major revolt against the Romans in A.D. 6, and even though his rebellion was ultimately crushed, it gave birth to the extremist political group known as the Zealots. ^k The Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*.

CHAPTER 6

The Seven Are Chosen

(1) In those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Jews who spoke Greek muttered complaints against their fellow Jews who spoke Aramaic, because the Greek-speaking widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.

(2) So the twelve called the community of disciples together and said, “It is not right for us to give up preaching God’s word to serve food at tables. (3) Brothers, you must look for seven men among you who have a good reputation. They must be full of the Spirit and wisdom, and we will give them the responsibility of meeting this need. (4) Then we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

(5) Now this proposal pleased the entire community. So they chose Stephen, a man filled with faith and the Holy Spirit, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus from Antioch, who was a convert to the Jewish faith. (6) And they brought these men before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

(7) Meanwhile, the word of God kept on spreading; the number of disciples in Jerusalem was increasing rapidly, and a large group of priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

Stephen Is Arrested

(8) Now Stephen was filled with grace^a and power, and he was performing great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. (9) However, some Jews from the Synagogue of the Freedmen,^b as it was called—Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, and the provinces of Cilicia and Asia^c—rose up and debated with Stephen. (10) But their arguments were no match for the Spirit-filled wisdom with which he was speaking.

(11) So they secretly persuaded some men to say that they had heard Stephen making blasphemous remarks against Moses and against God. (12) These liars stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes, and they made a rush for Stephen, grabbed him, and brought him before the Sanhedrin.^d (13) Then they had false witnesses stand up and testify, “This fellow never stops speaking against the holy place^e and the law. (14) For example, we have heard him saying that Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us.”

(15) Now all the men who were sitting in the Sanhedrin gazed intently at Stephen, and they noticed his face. For it was like the face of an angel.

^aSome manuscripts read *faith*. ^bThis name indicates that the synagogue was founded by Jews who had been freed from slavery or by their descendants. ^cOr *some Jews from the Synagogue of the Freedmen, as it was called, and Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, and the provinces of Cilicia and Asia*—Cyrene was located in Libya; *Alexandria* was located in Egypt, and the Roman provinces of *Cilicia* and *Asia* were located in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). ^dThe Great Sanhedrin (or Great Council) functioned as the highest Jewish court. See also verse 15. ^eSome manuscripts read *this holy place*—the reference is to the temple.

CHAPTER 7

Stephen's Message to the Sanhedrin

(1) Then the high priest asked, “Are these charges true?” (2) At this, Stephen replied, “Brothers and fathers, listen to me. The God of glory appeared to our ancestor^a Abraham while he was in Mesopotamia, before he settled in Haran. (3) ‘Leave your country and your relatives,’ God told him, ‘and go to the land I will show you.’^b

(4) So Abraham left the country of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. But after his father died, God directed him to migrate into this land where you are now living. (5) However, God did not give him any of it to call his own, not even enough to put his foot on. And yet God promised that he and his future descendants^c would possess the land, even though he had no child at that time. (6) This is the way God put it: ‘Your descendants will be strangers in a foreign country, and its people will oppress them as slaves for 400 years. (7) But I will judge the nation that enslaves them, and afterward, they will come out and worship Me in this place.’^d

(8) Then God gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision. So Abraham became the father of Isaac, and he circumcised Isaac on the eighth day after his birth. Later, Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob became the father of the twelve patriarchs.

(9) Now because the patriarchs were jealous of their brother Joseph, they sold him into slavery in Egypt. But God was with Joseph, (10) and after God had rescued him from all his troubles, He gave him favor and wisdom in the presence of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. So Pharaoh made Joseph ruler over Egypt and over all the royal household.

(11) Then a famine brought great hardship to all of Egypt and Canaan, and our ancestors could not find food. (12) But when Jacob heard that there was food in Egypt, he sent our ancestors on their first visit there. (13) And on their second visit, Joseph told his brothers who he was, and Pharaoh became acquainted with Joseph's family. (14) Afterward, Joseph sent for his father Jacob and all his

relatives—75 people in all.^e

(15) So Jacob went down to Egypt, where he and our ancestors completed their lives.(16) Then their remains were taken back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham had purchased with a sum of silver. Abraham had purchased this tomb from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.^f

(17) Now the time was drawing near for God to fulfill the promise He had made to Abraham. Meanwhile, our people in Egypt were increasing rapidly in numbers, (18) until another king, who knew nothing about Joseph, became the ruler of Egypt.^g (19) This king plotted against our people and mistreated our ancestors by making them throw out their babies to keep them from living.

(20) It was at this critical time that Moses was born, and he was an extraordinary child in the sight of God. For three months, he was nurtured in his father's home, (21) and when he was placed outside, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son. (22) So Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he became an excellent speaker and a man of action.

(23) But as Moses was nearing the age of 40, he decided to visit his fellow Israelis. (24) And when he saw one of them being treated unfairly, he sprang to the man's defense and avenged him by striking down the Egyptian. (25) Moses was assuming that his own people would understand that God was using him to rescue them. And yet they did not understand this.

(26) The next day Moses came across two Israelis who were fighting. And he tried to reconcile them by saying, 'Men, you are brothers; why are you hurting one another?' (27) But the man in the wrong pushed Moses away and asked, 'Who made you ruler and judge over us? (28) Are you planning to kill me like you killed the Egyptian yesterday?'^h

(29) Now when Moses heard these words, he fled the country and lived as a foreigner in Midian,ⁱ where two sons were born to him. (30) And after 40 years had passed, a Messenger appeared to him in the flames of a burning thorn bush in the desert near Mount Sinai. (31) When Moses saw this, he was amazed at the sight, and as he went over to get a closer look, the voice of the Lord came to him: (32) 'I am the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.'^j

At this, Moses began quivering with fear and did not dare to look. (33) But the Lord spoke to him again: 'Take off your sandals, because the place where you are standing is holy ground. (34) I have certainly seen the oppression of My people in Egypt. I have heard their groans and have come down to rescue them. Now come, let Me send you to Egypt!'^k

(35) This was the Moses the Israelis disowned with the words, 'Who made you ruler and judge?' This was the person God had sent to be their ruler and redeemer through the intervention of the Messenger Who appeared to him in the thorn bush. (36) This person led them out of Egypt. He also performed wonders and

miraculous signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea,¹ and for 40 years in the desert. (37) This was the Moses who told the Israelis, ‘God will raise up a Prophet for you, from among your own people, and He will be like me.’^m (38) This was the person who was in the assembly in the desert. He was with our ancestors and with the Messenger Who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, where he received living words to pass on to you.ⁿ

(39) But our ancestors had no desire to obey him. Instead, they pushed him away and turned back to Egypt in their hearts. (40) ‘Make us gods who will be our leaders,’ they told Aaron. ‘As for this fellow Moses who led us out of Egypt, we don’t know what has happened to him!’^o

(41) On that occasion, they made an image of a calf. Then they offered a sacrifice to their idol and started rejoicing over what their hands had made. (42) So God turned away from them and gave them up to worship the heavenly bodies. As it is written in the book of the prophets:

‘You didn’t bring Me slaughtered animals and sacrifices during those 40 years in the desert, did you, people of Israel?
(43) No, you took along the tabernacle of Molech,
and the star-image of the god Rephan^p—
those models you made for their worship.
So I will have you deported beyond Babylon.’^q

(44) In the desert, our ancestors had the tabernacle of testimony. For God spoke to Moses and directed him to make it like the model he had seen. (45) Now after the tabernacle was passed down to our ancestors who were with Joshua, they brought it into this country when they evicted the nations that God drove out before them. So it remained here until the time of David, (46) who found God’s favor and asked to construct a dwelling place for the Lord of Jacob.^r (47) But it was Solomon who actually built a house for Him.

(48) And yet the Most High does not live in buildings made by human beings. As the prophet puts it:

(49) “‘Heaven is My throne,
and earth is the footstool for My feet.
What kind of house will you build for Me?’”
says the Lord.
“‘What need do I have for a place of rest?
(50) Didn’t I make all these things?’”^s

Stephen Cuts His Message Short

(51) You stubborn people! Heathen at heart and deaf to the truth! You are always resisting the Holy Spirit. Your ancestors did it, and so do you! (52) Which of the prophets did your ancestors fail to persecute? As a matter of fact, they killed the prophets who predicted the coming of the Righteous One,^t and now you have betrayed and murdered Him! (53) You received the law that was transmitted by

angels,^u but you have not obeyed it.”

Stephen Is Stoned

(54) Now as the leaders were listening to these words, they became increasingly irate, and they started grinding their teeth at him. (55) But Stephen was filled with the Holy Spirit, and as he gazed intently into heaven, he saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at God’s right hand. (56) “Look!” he exclaimed, “I see heaven! It has been opened up, and the Son of Man is standing at the right hand of God!”

(57) At this, they screamed at the top of their voices and held their hands over their ears. Then they made a determined rush at him, (58) threw him out of the city, and began stoning him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their outer clothing at the feet of a young man named Saul. (59) Now as they continued stoning him, Stephen kept praying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!” (60) Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And with that, he fell asleep.^v

^aOr *father*—in this chapter, each use of *ancestor* or *ancestors* can be rendered as *father* or *fathers*. ^b Gen. 12:1 ^c Literally, *seed*—see also verse 6. ^d Gen. 15:13-14; Ex. 3:12 ^e In Gen. 46:27 and Ex. 1:5, the readings in the Masoretic Text list the total number of people in Jacob’s family as 70, while the readings in the Septuagint list 75 people. ^f Jacob was buried in Hebron, in the cave of Machpelah, which Abraham purchased from Ephron the Hittite, while Joseph was buried at Shechem, on the plot of land that Jacob purchased from the sons of Hamor. See Gen. 23:16-20; 49:29-32; 50:13, and Josh. 24:32. These two purchases have been telescoped into one. ^g Some manuscripts omit *of Egypt*. ^h Ex. 2:14 (Septuagint) ⁱ *Midian* was located to the east of Egypt, in northwestern Arabia. ^j Ex. 3:6 ^k Ex. 3:5, 7-10 ^l also known as *the Sea of Reeds* ^m Deut. 18:15 ⁿ Some manuscripts read *us*. ^o Ex. 32:1, 23 ^p Some manuscripts read *of your god Rephan*. ^q Amos 5:25-27 ^r Some manuscripts read *family of Jacob*, while others read *God of Jacob*. However, it seems likely that the Greek text has suffered corruption here. For this reason, a number of textual scholars have proposed the emendation *Lord of Jacob*. ^s Isa. 66:1-2 ^t *The Righteous One* is a Messianic title that refers to Jesus. ^u According to Jewish tradition, the law was given to Moses through angels. ^v For Luke, *sleep* was a euphemism for death.

CHAPTER 8

Saul Persecutes the Church

(1) Now Saul was giving his full approval to Stephen's murder. So that day marked the beginning of severe persecution for the church in Jerusalem, and all the believers, except the apostles, were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria. (2) Devout men buried Stephen and mourned loudly for him, (3) but Saul was trying to destroy the church. He kept entering house after house to drag off men and women and put them in prison.

The Good News Reaches Samaria

(4) So the believers who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. (5) Philip went down to the city of Samaria^a and began proclaiming the Christ^b to its inhabitants. (6) And as the crowds listened to Philip, and as they saw the miraculous signs he was performing, they started giving him their undivided attention. (7) For many of the people there were possessed by evil spirits. But these spirits were coming out of them with loud cries, and many who were paralyzed and lame were also healed. (8) So there was great joy in that city.

(9) Now for some time, a man in the city named Simon had been astonishing the Samaritan nation with his magic. He kept claiming to be someone important, (10) and all the people, from the least to the greatest, used to give him their full attention. "This man is the divine power that is called The Great Power!" they kept repeating. (11) The Samaritans used to give Simon this attention because he had astonished them for a long time with his magical rites. (12) But when Philip proclaimed the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, the people believed him, and both men and women were baptized. (13) Eventually, even Simon believed, and after his baptism, he followed Philip around. For he was overwhelmed with wonder as he saw the great signs and miracles that were taking place.

(14) When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that the Samaritans had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. (15) So these two men went down and prayed that the people would receive the Holy Spirit. (16) (As yet, the Holy Spirit had not descended on any of them—they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) (17) Then Peter and John laid their hands on the people, and they started receiving the Holy Spirit.

Simon Tries to Buy the Holy Spirit

(18) Now when Simon noticed that the Spirit^c was given to the Samaritans as the apostles laid their hands on them, he offered Peter and John money. (19) "Give me this authority also," he said, "so that when I lay my hands on someone, he will

receive the Holy Spirit.”

(20) But Peter responded, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could buy God’s Gift with money. (21) You have no part or share in this message, because your heart is corrupt in the sight of God. (22) So repent of your wickedness, and pray to the Lord. Perhaps He will forgive you for thinking such a thought. (23) For I can see that you are filled with bitter poison and chained by wickedness.” (24) Then Simon replied, “Both of you must pray to the Lord for me, so that none of the things you have mentioned will happen to me.”

(25) Now after they had given their testimony and had spoken the word of the Lord, Peter and John continued to proclaim the good news in many Samaritan villages as they made their way back to Jerusalem.

Philip Tells an Ethiopian about Jesus

(26) Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Set out at noon^d on the desert road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.”^e (27) So Philip started out, and along the way, he came across an Ethiopian. This man was a eunuch—a court official who was in charge of the entire treasury of the Kandake,^f or queen of Ethiopia. He had gone to Jerusalem to worship (28) and was on his way home, sitting in his chariot, reading the prophet Isaiah.

(29) Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over to that chariot and stay close to it.” (30) So Philip ran toward the chariot and heard the man reading the prophet Isaiah. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked. (31) “How can I understand it without someone to guide me?” the man replied. And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

(32) Now the eunuch was reading this passage of scripture:

“He was led away like a sheep to be slaughtered,
and like a lamb that is silent before its shearer,
He did not open His mouth.

(33) During His humiliation,
justice was denied Him.

And who will tell His family history?
For His life was taken from the earth.”^g

(34) “Please tell me,” the eunuch said to Philip, “who is the prophet talking about? Is he talking about himself or someone else?” (35) So Philip began with this passage of scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. (36) And as they were traveling along the road, they came to some water. “Look, here’s water!” the eunuch exclaimed. “What is keeping me from being baptized?”^h

(38) Then the eunuch commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. (39) But when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away, and the eunuch never saw him again. Nevertheless, he continued on his way rejoicing.

(40) Meanwhile, Philip arrived in Azotus.¹ And as he was passing through the towns in that region, he continued proclaiming the good news until he came to Caesarea.

^aMost likely, this was the city that was named *Samaria* in Old Testament times. It was rebuilt by Herod the Great and given the name *Sebaste*.^b The Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. See also verse 12. ^c Some manuscripts read *the Holy Spirit*. ^d Or “Go south”^e Or “Set out at noon on the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is a desert region.”^f This term should be understood as a title rather than a personal name. ^g Isa. 53:7-8 (Septuagint) ^h Some manuscripts add (37) “If you believe with all your heart, you can be,” Philip told him. “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God,” he replied. ⁱ Azotus was the Philistine city of Ashdod in Old Testament times. It was located about 14 miles north of Gaza and about three miles from the sea. From Azotus, Philip probably followed the coastal road northward to Caesarea.

CHAPTER 9

Jesus Appears to Saul

(1) Saul, however, was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. So he went to the high priest (2) and asked for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, authorizing him to arrest and bring to Jerusalem any men or women he could find who belonged to the Way. (3) But as he was on the road and nearing Damascus, a light from the sky suddenly flashed around him. (4) And he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” (5) “Who are You, Lord?” he asked. “I am Jesus, Whom you are persecuting,” the Lord replied. (6) “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” (7) The men who were Saul’s traveling companions were standing there speechless. For even though they heard the sound, they did not see anyone.

(8) Then Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes, he was blind. So his companions led him by the hand into Damascus, (9) and for three days, his blindness persisted, and he did not eat or drink anything.

Saul Is Healed and Baptized

(10) Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. And in a vision, the Lord called out to him, “Ananias!” “Here I am, Lord!” he answered. (11) “Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street,” the Lord told him, “and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. This man is praying, (12) and in a vision,^a he saw a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him to restore his sight.”

(13) “Lord,” Ananias responded, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the evil he has done to Your holy people in Jerusalem. (14) And he came here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on Your name.”

(15) But the Lord said to Ananias, “You must go! For this man is My chosen instrument to bring My name before the Gentiles and their kings, and before the people of Israel. (16) And I will show him how much he will have to suffer for My name.”

(17) So Ananias set out for the house and entered it. Then he laid his hands on Saul and said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus appeared to you on the road as you were coming here, and He has sent me to help you regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” (18) Immediately, some objects that looked like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. Then he got up and was baptized, (19) and after he had eaten some food, his strength returned.

Saul Preaches in Damascus

Now Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus, (20) and right away, he started proclaiming Jesus in the synagogues. “This Man is the Son of God!” he declared, (21) and all the people who heard him were beside themselves with wonder. “Isn’t he the man who brought havoc on those in Jerusalem who call on this name?” they kept asking. “Didn’t he come here to arrest them and take them to the chief priests?” (22) But Saul’s preaching became more and more powerful, and his proofs that Jesus is the Christ^b were baffling the Jews who lived in Damascus.

Saul Escapes in a Basket

(23) Now after a considerable amount of time had gone by, the Jews formed a plot to take Saul’s life. (24) But he found out about their plan, and because they were watching the city gates day and night to kill him, (25) his fellow disciples took him during the night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the city wall.

Saul Meets the Apostles

(26) When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he kept trying to join the disciples. But they were all afraid of him, because they didn’t believe that he really was a disciple. (27) Then Barnabas took Saul and brought him to the apostles. And Barnabas gave them a description of how Saul had seen the Lord on the road, how the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus, he had openly preached in the name of Jesus.

(28) So Saul stayed with the disciples in Jerusalem and associated freely with them as he preached boldly in the name of the Lord. (29) He had ongoing debates with the Jews who spoke Greek, but they kept trying to kill him. (30) And when the brothers became aware of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.^c

(31) Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened as it continued to live in reverence for the Lord, and through the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, it was growing in numbers.

Aeneas Is Healed

(32) While Peter was traveling through these regions, he went down to visit God's holy people who were living in Lydda.^d (33) And he found a paralytic there named Aeneas who had been lying on a mat for eight years. (34) "Aeneas," Peter said to him, "Jesus Christ^e is healing you! Get up and put your mat away!" And immediately, he got up, (35) and when all the people who were living in Lydda and Sharon saw him, they turned to the Lord.

Dorcas Is Resurrected

(36) In Joppa,^f there was a female disciple named Tabitha (which means Dorcas when it is translated into Greek),^g and she was constantly performing good deeds and acts of charity. (37) But about that time, she became sick and died, and her body was washed and laid in an upper room. (38) Now Lydda is near Joppa. So when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent him two men with the urgent request—"Please come over to us without delay!" (39) At this, Peter went with them, and as soon as he arrived, he was taken upstairs, where all the widows gathered around him. They were crying and showing him the shirts and robes that Dorcas had been making while she was still with them.

(40) But Peter made all of them leave the room, and after he had gotten down on his knees and prayed, he turned to the corpse and said, "Tabitha, get up!" With that, she opened her eyes, and as soon as she saw Peter, she sat up. (41) Then he gave her his hand and helped her to her feet. And he called God's holy people, including the widows, and presented her to them alive.

(42) Now the news about this miracle spread all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord. (43) So Peter stayed in Joppa for some time, with a leather worker named Simon.

^aSome manuscripts omit *in a vision*. ^bThe Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. See also verse 34. ^c*Tarsus* was the city where Saul was born and where he spent his childhood. It was a major cultural center in the region of Cilicia, which was located in southern Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). ^d*Lydda* was located on the fertile coastal Plain of Sharon, about ten miles southeast of Joppa. ^eSome manuscripts read *Jesus, the Christ*. ^f*Joppa* (modern-day Haifa) was an important port on the Mediterranean coast of Palestine. ^gBoth *Tabitha* (Aramaic) and *Dorcas* (Greek) mean *Gazelle*.

CHAPTER 10

An Angel Visits Cornelius

(1) There was a man named Cornelius in Caesarea—a centurion in what was called the Italian Regiment.^a (2) He and all his family were pious and God-fearing. He made many charitable contributions to the poor among the Jewish people, and he prayed to God on a regular basis.

(3) Now about three o'clock one afternoon,^b he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God come into his room and say to him, “Cornelius!” (4) At this, he stared at the angel in fear and asked, “What is it, sir?” “Your prayers and acts of charity have come up as a memorial before God,” the angel replied. (5) “Now send some men to Joppa, and have them ask for Simon, who is called Peter. (6) He is the guest of another Simon—a leather worker, whose house is by the sea.”

(7) So after the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants. (8) And he gave them a detailed description of everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa.

A Vision of Unclean Animals

(9) Now about noon^c the next day, as the men were on their way and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. (10) And he became very hungry and wanted something to eat. But while the meal was being prepared, a trance came over him, (11) and he saw heaven standing open, and an object that looked like a large linen sheet was being lowered to the earth by its four corners. (12) In it were all kinds of four-footed animals, reptiles, and birds of the sky.

(13) Then a voice said to him, “Get up, Peter! Kill something and eat it.” (14) “Oh, no, Lord!” Peter responded. “I have never eaten anything that is defiled or unclean.” (15) But the voice spoke to him again, “When it comes to the things that God has declared clean, you must stop thinking of them as defiled.” (16) And after this had happened three times, the object was quickly taken up to heaven. (17) While Peter was puzzling over the meaning of this vision, the men who had been sent by Cornelius learned where Simon’s house was and arrived at the gate. (18) Then they called out and began inquiring if Simon Peter was a guest there.

(19) Now Peter was still pondering the vision when the Spirit said to him, “There are three^d men who are looking for you. (20) So get up, go downstairs, and do not hesitate to go with them. For I have sent them.”

(21) At this, Peter went down to the men. “I’m the person you’re looking for,” he said. “So why are you here?” (22) “Cornelius, the centurion, is a righteous and God-fearing man,” they replied. “He is respected by the entire Jewish nation, and

he was commanded by a holy angel to have you come to his home, so he could listen to your message.”

(23) Then Peter invited the men in to be his guests, and in the morning, he set out with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa also went along.

Peter Visits Cornelius

(24) On the following day, they^e arrived in Caesarea, where Cornelius was waiting anxiously for them. He had called together his relatives and close friends, (25) and as Peter was entering the house, he met him and fell at his feet in reverence. (26) But Peter made him get up. “On your feet!” he said. “I’m only a human being^f like you.”

(27) Now as they were talking, Peter went inside and found that many people had gathered there. (28) So he said to them, “I don’t need to tell you that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I must not speak of any human being as defiled or unclean. (29) And that is why I came without objection when you sent for me. But I’m still inquiring about your reason for bringing me here.”

(30) At this, Cornelius spoke up. “Four days ago, I was praying in my home at this very time—at three in the afternoon. Suddenly, a man in bright clothing stood before me (31) and said, ‘Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your acts of charity. (32) Now send some men to Joppa and have them ask for Simon, who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of another Simon—a leather worker who lives by the sea.’^g (33) So I sent for you at once, and it was good of you to come. All of us have gathered here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to say.”

(34) Then Peter started speaking: “Now I know the truth! God does not show favoritism! (35) But in every nation, the person who shows Him reverence and does what is right is acceptable to Him. (36) God sent this message to the people of Israel, when He told them the good news about peace through Jesus Christ,^h Who is Lord of all.

(37) You are aware of the Event that occurred throughout Judea. It began in Galilee after the baptism that John preached. (38) God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the power of the Holy Spirit, and He went around doing good and healing everyone who was oppressed by the devil. For God was with Him.

(39) We are witnesses of all that He did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. The people who live there killed Him by hanging Him on a tree. (40) But on the third day, God raised Him from the dead and allowed Him to be seen. (41) He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen. I am referring to those of us who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead.

(42) Now He commanded us to preach to the people and to sound the warning

that God has appointed Him to be the Judge of the living and the dead. (43) All the prophets testify about Him and declare that through His name, everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness for his sins.”

The Gentiles Receive the Holy Spirit

(44) While these words were still on Peter’s lips, the Holy Spirit fell on all the people who were listening to his message. (45) Now the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were overwhelmed with wonder because the Gift of the Holy Spirit had even been poured out on the Gentiles. (46) For they heard the Gentiles speaking in other languages and praising God.

Then Peter spoke up: (47) “Since these people have received the Holy Spirit in the same way we did, is anyone prepared to deny them the water of baptism?” (48) So he directed that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and afterward, they asked him to stay with them for several days.

^aIt is known from inscriptions that the Second Italian Cohort (or army regiment or battalion) was stationed in Syria during the middle part of the first century, and there is every reason to believe that it was there even earlier. ^bLiterally, *the ninth hour*;—see also verse 30. ^cLiterally, *the sixth hour* ^dOne important manuscript reads *two*. ^eSome manuscripts read *he*. ^fThe Greek term that has been translated *human being* is gender inclusive. See also verse 28. ^gSome manuscripts add *and when he comes, he will speak to you*. ^hThe Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. See also verse 48.

CHAPTER 11

Peter Defends His Actions

(1) Now the apostles and brothers in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also accepted God’s message. (2) But when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers started criticizing him. (3) “You visited uncircumcised men and ate with them!” they objected.

(4) So Peter began explaining the facts in the order they had occurred: (5) “I was praying in the city of Joppa, and while I was in a trance, I saw a vision. An object that looked like a large linen sheet was being lowered from heaven by its four corners, and it came down next to me. (6) When I peered into it, I noticed four-footed animals of the earth, wild animals, reptiles, and birds of the sky. (7) Then I heard a voice saying to me, ‘Get up, Peter! Kill something and eat it.’

(8) ‘Oh, no, Lord!’ I replied. ‘Nothing defiled or unclean has ever entered my

mouth.’ (9) But the voice from heaven spoke a second time, ‘When it comes to the things that God has declared clean, you must stop thinking of them as defiled.’ (10) This happened three times, and then it was all pulled up into heaven again.

(11) At that moment, three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea arrived at the house where we were^a staying, (12) and the Spirit told me to have no hesitation about going with them. These six brothers also went with me, and when we entered the man’s house, (13) he told us how he had seen an angel standing in his home and saying, ‘Send some men to Joppa and have them ask for Simon, who is called Peter. (14) He will speak words that will bring salvation to you and to everyone in your home.’

(15) Now as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as He had fallen on us at the beginning. (16) Then I remembered how the Lord used to say, ‘John baptized with^b water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’^c (17) So if God gave them the same Gift He gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to stand in God’s way?’ (18) When the others heard this, they drifted off into silence. Then they praised God and said, “So God has given even the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life.”

The Good News Reaches Antioch

(19) Now the people who were scattered by the persecution that broke out after the affair with Stephen went as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch,^d and they only took the message to Jews. (20) But there were some men from Cyprus and Cyrene^e among them who went to Antioch, and as they proclaimed the good news about the Lord Jesus, they started speaking to Greeks^f as well. (21) And because the Lord’s power was with them, a large number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

(22) So when the church members in Jerusalem heard the news about these disciples, they sent Barnabas to Antioch. (23) And as soon as he arrived and saw God’s grace in action, he was delighted, and he kept encouraging all of them to remain faithful as they devoted their hearts to the Lord. (24) For he was a good man who was filled with the Holy Spirit and with faith, and a large number of people were brought to the Lord.

(25) Then Barnabas set out for Tarsus to look for Saul, (26) and when he found him, he brought him back to Antioch. So for a whole year, Barnabas and Saul were guests of the church, and they taught a large number of people. It was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians.

Agabus Predicts a Famine

(27) Now at that time, some prophets from Jerusalem came down to Antioch. (28) And one of them, who was named Agabus, stood up and made a prediction through the Spirit that there would be a severe famine over the entire Roman world. (This famine occurred when Claudius was emperor.) (29) So the disciples

decided to send whatever financial aid each of them could afford to the brothers in Judea (30)—which they did by dispatching their gift in the care of Barnabas and Saul to the elders in Jerusalem.^g

^aSome manuscripts read *I was*. ^b Or *in*—this applies to each use of *with* in verse 16. ^c See Acts 1:5. ^d Two cities named *Antioch* are mentioned in the New Testament. One was located in Syria, and the other in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). The reference here is to Syrian Antioch. ^e *Cyrene* was a Libyan city in North Africa. ^f The exact meaning of the term that has been translated *Greeks* has been debated, but it probably refers to the non-Jewish population of Antioch that spoke Greek. ^g Although the words *in Jerusalem* do not appear in the original text, they have been added for clarification.

CHAPTER 12

Herod^a Persecutes the Church

(1) At that time, King Herod launched a violent attack on some of the church members. (2) He had James, the brother of John, killed with a sword,^b (3) and when he realized that this pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter. All this happened during the Days of Unleavened Bread.^c

(4) Now after he had arrested Peter, Herod put him in prison and handed him over to 16 soldiers, who guarded him in squads of four. It was Herod's plan to bring him out after the Passover for a public trial. (5) So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was praying fervently to God for him.

An Angel Releases Peter from Prison

(6) On the very night before Herod was going to bring him to trial, Peter was secured by two chains and was sleeping between two soldiers, while outside the entrance, guards were keeping watch over the prison. (7) Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared, and a light gleamed in the cell. Then the angel struck Peter on the side and awakened him. "Quick! Get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.

(8) "Fasten your belt and put on your sandals," the angel told him. And Peter did this. "Wrap your robe around you and follow me," the angel continued. (9) So Peter left the cell and started following him, but he had no idea that the angel was actually doing these things. He thought he was seeing a vision.

(10) Now they passed the first and second guard posts and came to the iron gate that led into the city, which opened for them automatically. And they went outside. Then they made their way down the street for one block, and suddenly, the angel left Peter. (11) At this, he came to himself. "Now I really know that

the Lord has sent His angel and has rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were expecting!" he exclaimed.

Peter Visits His Christian Friends

(12) When Peter realized what had happened, he went to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark,^d where many people had gathered to pray. (13) And as he knocked at the outer gate, a servant girl named Rhoda responded. (14) But when she recognized Peter's voice, she was so happy that she failed to open the gate. Instead, she ran back in and announced that Peter was standing outside.

(15) "You're crazy!" the people told her, but she continued to insist that it was so. "Then it must be his angel!"^e they kept saying. (16) Meanwhile, Peter went on knocking, and when they opened the gate and saw him, they were beside themselves with wonder. (17) But after he had motioned with his hand for them to be quiet, he described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. "Give James^f and the brothers a report about this," he added. And with that, he left for another place.

(18) When daylight came, there was great anxiety among the soldiers over what had happened to Peter. (19) And after Herod had made a careful search for him that was unsuccessful, he cross-examined the guards and ordered their execution. Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea and spent some time there.

The Death of Herod

(20) Now because Herod was having a bitter quarrel with the people of Tyre and Sidon, they presented themselves to him as a group. And after they had persuaded Blastus (who was in charge of the royal bedroom) to help them, they began asking for peace, because their country depended on the king's country for food. (21) So when the appointed day arrived, Herod put on his royal clothing, sat down on the judgment seat, and proceeded to make a speech to them.

(22) Then the crowd began to shout, "This is a god speaking, not a human being!"^g (23) Immediately, an angel of the Lord struck Herod because he refused to honor God, and he was eaten by worms and died. (24) But the word of God continued to advance and spread.

(25) Now as for Barnabas and Saul, when they had completed their mission in Jerusalem, they returned to Antioch,^h and they took John Mark with them.

^aThis was Herod Agrippa I. He was a grandson of Herod the Great—the king who was ruling when Jesus was born. ^bJames, the son of Zebedee, was the first apostle to suffer martyrdom. ^cOr *the Days of Unfermentation*. ^dJohn Mark was the author of the second Gospel. ^eIt was commonly believed that a guardian angel was assigned to each of God's people, and that when this angel took on human form, he appeared in the likeness of the person to whom he had been assigned. ^fPeter was referring to James, the brother of Jesus, who became the

leader of the church in Jerusalem. ^g The Greek term that has been translated *human being* is gender inclusive. ^h Although the words *to Antioch* do not appear in the original text, they have been added for clarification. According to Acts 11:30, Barnabas and Saul had taken a famine relief offering from Antioch to the elders in Jerusalem. Some manuscripts read *Now when Barnabas and Saul had completed their mission, they returned from Jerusalem and took John Mark with them.*

CHAPTER 13

Paul's First Missionary Journey

(1) There was a group of prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch. It included: Barnabas, Simeon called Black,^a Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been raised with Herod the tetrarch^b), and Saul. (2) While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set Barnabas and Saul apart for Me, so they can do the work to which I have called them." (3) Then the others fasted and prayed, and after they had laid their hands on them, they sent them off.

The Good News Reaches Cyprus

(4) Now after they had been sent out by the Holy Spirit, Barnabas and Saul went down to Seleucia,^c and from there, they sailed to Cyprus. (5) Eventually, they arrived in Salamis,^d where they started proclaiming the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. (They also had John^e with them as their assistant.)

(6) Then they traveled through the entire island until they came to Paphos,^f where they met up with a Jewish magician named Bar-Jesus who pretended to be a prophet. (7) He was an associate of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, who was a wise man and who had sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God. (8) But Elymas the magician (for that is what his name means)^g tried to oppose them and turn the proconsul away from the faith.

(9) At this, Saul, who was also known as Paul,^h was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he looked directly at Elymas. (10) "You fraud and charlatan!" he exclaimed. "You are a child of the devil and an enemy of all righteousness! Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? (11) Now the Lord's hand is against you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a while."

Immediately, a dark mist came over his vision, and he groped around as he tried to find people who would lead him by the hand. (12) When the proconsul saw what had happened, he became a believer. For he was amazed at the Lord's teaching.

The Good News Reaches Pisidian Antioch

(13) Now Paul and his comrades set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia,ⁱ where John deserted them and returned to Jerusalem. (14) Then they moved on from Perga and arrived in Pisidian Antioch,^j where they entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and sat down. (15) And after the readings from the law and the prophets, the synagogue leaders sent this message to them, “Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, be sure to speak.”

(16) So Paul stood up, and after motioning with his hand, he said, “Men of Israel and you Gentiles who are God-fearers, listen to me! (17) The God of the Israelites chose our ancestors^k and made them into a great people when they lived in Egypt as foreigners. With an awesome display of power, He led them out of that country, (18) and for a period of about 40 years, He endured their conduct^l in the desert.

(19) Then God destroyed seven nations in Canaan and allowed His people to possess their land (20) for approximately 450 years. After that, He gave them judges until the time of the prophet Samuel.^m (21) It was around this time that the people demanded a king, so God gave them Saul, the son of Kish, a man from the tribe of Benjamin. He ruled for 40 years, (22) until God deposed him and made David their king. In regard to David, God gave this testimony: ‘I have found David, the son of Jesse, to be a man after My own heart. For he will do everything I desire.’ⁿ

(23) Now from David’s line of descendants,^o God brought the Savior, Jesus, to Israel, as He had promised. (24) Before Jesus came on the scene, John had already proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. (25) And as John’s work was nearing its end, he used to say, ‘Who do you think I am? I am not the One. No, Someone is coming after me, and I am unworthy to loosen the sandals on His feet.’

(26) My brothers—you who stem from the family line of Abraham and you Gentile God-fearers—this message about salvation has been sent to us.^p (27) The inhabitants of Jerusalem and their leaders did not recognize Jesus. Nor did they understand the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath. And yet they fulfilled them by condemning Him. (28) For even though they found no reason for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have Him executed. (29) And after they had finished doing everything that was written about Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb. (30) But God raised Him from the dead, (31) and for many days, He appeared to those who had traveled with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, and they are now His witnesses to the people.

(32) So we are bringing you good news about the promise that was given to our ancestors. (33) God has fulfilled this promise for our descendants^q by raising Jesus from the dead. As it is written in the second Psalm:

‘You are My Son;
today I have become Your Father.’^r

(34) The fact that God raised Jesus from the dead and that He was never to experience decay is stated in these words:

‘I will give You the holy and faithful promises
that were made to David.’^s

(35) And here is what another psalm says:

‘You will not let Your Holy One experience decay.’^t

(36) For after David had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep.^u So he was gathered to his ancestors, and his body experienced decay. (37) But the Man God raised from the dead did not experience decay.

(38) My brothers, you need to understand that through this Jesus, the forgiveness of sins is being proclaimed to you, and this forgiveness covers all the sins for which the law of Moses cannot provide justification. (39) For everyone who believes in this Man is justified! (40) So see to it that the warning in the prophets does not apply to you:

(41) ‘Look, you scoffers!
Be amazed and vanish away!
For I am doing a work in your time,
a work that you would never believe
even if someone explained it to you.’^v

(42) Now as Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people started urging them to speak about these topics on the next Sabbath. (43) And after the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to the Jewish faith followed Paul and Barnabas, who kept talking with them and trying to persuade them to continue in God’s grace.

(44) On the next Sabbath, almost the entire city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.^w (45) But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy, and they insulted Paul and tried to contradict what he was saying.

(46) At this, Paul and Barnabas boldly declared, “We had to speak God’s message to you first. But since you keep rejecting it and consider yourselves unworthy of eternal life, we are turning to the Gentiles. (47) For this is the directive the Lord has given us:

‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles,
so you can bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’^x

(48) Now when the Gentiles heard this, they started rejoicing and praising the Lord’s message.^y And all of them who had been appointed for eternal life became believers, (49) and the word of the Lord continued to spread through the whole region.

(50) But the Jews incited the prominent Gentile women who worshipped at the synagogue, along with the leading men of the city, and they stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas and expelled them from their region. (51) So the apostles shook the dust off their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium.^z (52) And the disciples were filled with constant joy and with the Holy Spirit.

^aIt is quite likely that Simeon was given this nickname because of his dark complexion. ^bThis was Herod Antipas. He was one of the sons of Herod the Great, who was ruling when Jesus was born. The term *tetrarch* indicates that he was the ruler over one of four districts in Palestine. ^c*Seleucia* served as the port for Syrian Antioch. It was located on the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea, a few miles from the mouth of the Orontes River. ^d*Salamis* was an important Greek city on the east coast of Cyprus. ^eThis was John Mark, the author of the second Gospel. See also verse 13. ^f*Paphos* was located on the west coast of Cyprus and was the seat of the Roman provincial government. ^g*Elymas* is probably a Semitic word with a meaning similar to *magician*. It is almost certain that Luke is not trying to equate the name *Elymas* with the name *Bar-Jesus*. ^hAs Saul's association with Gentiles increased, he began using his Roman name *Paul*. ⁱPaul and Barnabas crossed the sea from Cyprus to the southern coastal plain of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). The region where they landed was known as Pamphylia, and Perga was its main city. ^jTwo cities named *Antioch* are mentioned in the New Testament. One was in Syria, while the other was located on the border between Phrygia and Pisidia in Asia Minor. Although Paul and Barnabas began their missionary journey in Syrian Antioch, they were now visiting Pisidian Antioch. ^kOr *fathers*—see also verses 32 and 36. ^lSome manuscripts read *He cared for them*. ^mSome manuscripts read (19) *Then God destroyed seven nations in Canaan and allowed His people to possess their land, (20) and after this, He gave them judges for approximately 450 years until the time of the prophet Samuel*. ⁿ1 Sam. 13:14; Ps. 89:20 ^oLiterally, *from this man's seed*. ^pSome manuscripts read *to you*. ^qOr *children*—some manuscripts read *for us, their descendants (or children)*. ^rPs. 2:7 (Septuagint) ^sIsa. 55:3 ^tPs. 16:10 ^uSleep is a common New Testament euphemism for death. ^vHab. 1:5 ^wSome manuscripts read *the word of God*. ^xIsa. 49:6 ^ySome manuscripts read *God's message*. ^zPaul and Barnabas headed east to Iconium (modern Konya), which was on the border between Phrygia and Lycaonia in Asia Minor.

CHAPTER 14

The Good News Reaches Iconium

(1) Now the same thing happened at Iconium. Paul and Barnabas went into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a convincing way that a large number of Jews and Greeks believed. (2) But the unconverted Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers.

(3) Nevertheless, Paul and Barnabas spent a considerable amount of time there, and they continued to speak boldly as they relied on the Lord. What is more, the Lord kept affirming their message about His grace by giving them the ability to perform miraculous signs and wonders. (4) And yet the city's population was divided. Some of the people sided with the Jews, while others sided with the apostles.

(5) Eventually, an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and the Jews (along with their rulers) to abuse the apostles and stone them. (6) But they got wind of this and made their escape to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe,^a and the surrounding region, (7) where they continued to proclaim the good news.

The Good News Reaches Lystra and Derbe

(8) Now there was a man in Lystra who had been lame from birth; he had never been able to walk or use his feet. This man was sitting (9) and listening to Paul as he spoke. Then Paul looked directly at him, and when he saw that the man had faith to be healed, (10) he called out in a loud voice, "Stand up on your feet!" At this, the man jumped up and began to walk.

(11) When the people saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human^b form!" (12) They were calling Barnabas Zeus, and Paul Hermes, because he was the main speaker. (13) Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he wanted to join the people in offering sacrifices.

(14) But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard about their actions, they tore their clothes^c and rushed into the crowd. (15) "Men, why are you doing this?" they kept shouting. "We are only human beings like you, and we are bringing you good news. We are urging you to turn away from these empty things to the living God, Who made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them. (16) In earlier generations, God allowed all the nations to go their own way. (17) And yet He has provided Himself with witnesses. He has shown you His goodness by giving you rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, and by satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." (18) But even with these words, they could hardly keep the people from offering sacrifices to them.

(19) Then some Jews from Antioch and Iconium arrived and won the people over. So they stoned Paul and began dragging him out of the city, thinking he was dead. (20) But after the disciples had formed a circle around him, he got up and went back into the city. And the next day, he and Barnabas left for Derbe, (21) where they proclaimed the good news and made many disciples.

The Return Journey

After this, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, (22) and in each city,

they strengthened the disciples and encouraged them to remain faithful. “We must endure many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,” they declared. (23) They also appointed elders in each congregation, and with prayer and fasting, they entrusted them to the Lord in Whom they had put their faith.

(24) So Paul and Barnabas traveled through Pisidia and entered Pamphylia, (25) and after they had delivered the message in Perga, they went down to Attalia.^d (26) From there, they sailed back to Antioch,^e where they had been committed to God’s grace for the work they had now completed.

(27) When they arrived, they gathered the church members together and reported everything that God had accomplished through them and how He had opened a door of faith for the Gentiles. (28) And they spent a long time with the disciples.

^a *Lycaonia* was a region in central Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). *Lystra* was located to the southwest of Iconium, and *Derbe* was southeast of Lystra, although its precise location is unknown. ^b The Greek term that has been translated *human/human beings* in verses 11 and 15 is gender inclusive. ^c It was a common practice for pious Jews to tear their clothing when they heard blasphemy. ^d *Attalia* (modern Antalya) was a Mediterranean port on the coast of Pamphylia. Here the apostles boarded a ship that was going to Syria. ^e Paul and Barnabas had finally returned to Syrian Antioch, where they began their journey.

CHAPTER 15

Controversy about the Law

(1) Now some people came down from Judea to Antioch^a and started teaching the brothers that unless they were circumcised according to Mosaic custom, they could not be saved. (2) And this led to fierce arguing and debate with Paul and Barnabas. So arrangements were made for Paul, Barnabas, and some others to go up to Jerusalem and discuss the matter with the apostles and elders, (3) and the church sent them on their way.

As they were traveling through Phoenicia and Samaria, they described in detail how the Gentiles had been converted, and this news brought great joy to all the brothers. (4) When they arrived in Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church, the apostles, and the elders, and they reported everything that God had accomplished through them. (5) But some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and insisted, “We must circumcise the Gentiles and command them to obey the law of Moses.”

(6) So the apostles and the elders assembled to look into this matter. (7) And after a lengthy debate, Peter got up and addressed them, “Brothers, you are aware that in the early days, God made a choice among you. It was His will that the Gentiles should hear the good news from my lips and believe it. (8) God, Who is acquainted with everyone’s heart, showed them His approval by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us. (9) And by cleansing their hearts by faith, He declared that there is no difference between us. (10) So why are you trying to test God’s patience by laying a yoke on the necks of these disciples that neither we nor our ancestors^b could bear? (11) No, we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they are.”

(12) With that, a hush came over the assembly, and the people kept listening as Barnabas and Paul described the miraculous signs and wonders that God had performed among the Gentiles through them. (13) And after they had finished speaking, James^c responded by saying, “Brothers, listen to me! (14) Simon^d has explained how God first showed His concern by choosing a people for Himself from among the Gentiles. (15) And the words of the prophets agree with this. As it is written:

(16) ““Afterward, I will come back
and rebuild the fallen booth of David.
I will rebuild its ruins and set it up again.
(17) Then the rest of the people^e
will seek Me,
including all the Gentiles
I have claimed as My own.”
This is what the Lord says,
Who has been revealing these things
(18) from the earliest times.”^f

(19) So it is my judgment that we should not bring difficulty on these Gentiles who are turning to God. (20) Instead, we should instruct them to abstain from meat that has been polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals,^g and from blood. (21) After all, Moses has been proclaimed in city after city for many generations, and his law is read aloud in the synagogues on every Sabbath.”

A Letter to the Gentile Believers

(22) Then the apostles, the elders, and the entire church decided to choose some men from their congregation and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. So they chose two leading men from among the brothers: Judas, who was known as Barsabbas,^h and Silas. (23) And they wrote the following letter for them to deliver:

“The brothers who are apostles and elders send greetings to their Gentile brothers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia.ⁱ

(24) We have heard that some people from our church have disturbed you with their talk, and they are still upsetting you, even though they have no instructions from us.^j (25) So we have all decided to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends, Barnabas and Paul, (26) who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. (27) This is why we are sending Judas and Silas to tell you these things in person. (28) The Holy Spirit has decided (as have we) not to burden you with anything more than these essentials: (29) You should abstain from food that has been sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals,^k and from sexual immorality. If you avoid these things, you will be doing well.

Best wishes!”

(30) So the men were sent off, and after they had gone down to Antioch, they gathered the church members together and delivered the letter. (31) And when the people read it, they were filled with joy at its encouraging message.

(32) What is more, Judas and Silas, who were also prophets, said many things to encourage and strengthen the brothers. (33) And after they had spent some time there, the brothers sent them back with a blessing of peace, and they returned to those who had sent them.^l (35) But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, and along with many others, they continued to teach and preach the word of the Lord.

Paul's Second Missionary Journey

(36) Some time later, Paul said to Barnabas, “Let’s go back and visit the brothers in all the cities where we proclaimed the word of the Lord and find out how they are doing.”

(37) Now Barnabas was determined to take John Mark with them. (38) But Paul kept insisting that the man who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone on to share in their missionary endeavor was unfit to accompany them. (39) And their disagreement was so sharp that they separated. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, (40) while Paul chose Silas. And after the brothers had entrusted him to the Lord’s^m favor, he set out (41) and continued his travels through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

^a Although the words *to Antioch* do not appear in the original text, they have been added for clarification. ^b Or *fathers* ^c This was Jesus’ brother James. ^d Literally, *Simeon*—Simeon is a variant of Simon. ^e The Greek term that has been translated *people* is gender inclusive. ^f Amos 9:11-12; Isa. 45:21 ^g Some manuscripts omit *from sexual immorality*, while other manuscripts omit *from the meat of strangled animals*. ^h *Barsabbas* appears to be an Aramaic term that means *Son of the Sabbath*. This probably indicates that Judas was born on the Sabbath. An earlier disciple named Joseph was also known as *Barsabbas*. See Acts 1:23. ⁱ *Cilicia* was a Roman province in southeastern Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). See also verse 41. ^j Some manuscripts read *and they are still upsetting you by claiming that you must be circumcised and obey the law, even though they have no instructions from us*. ^k Some manuscripts omit *from the meat of strangled animals*. ^l Some manuscripts insert (34) *But Silas decided to stay there*. Other manuscripts insert

(34) But Silas decided to stay with them, and Judas returned alone. ^m Some manuscripts read to God's.

CHAPTER 16

Paul Chooses Timothy

(1) Then Paul arrived in Derbe and Lystra. In Lystra, there was a disciple named Timothy, who was the son of a believing Jewish mother and a Greek father. (2) Timothy was highly regarded by the brothers in Lystra and Iconium, (3) and since Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, he circumcised him. He did this because all the Jews who lived in that area were aware that Timothy's father had been a Greek.

(4) Now as they were making their way through the different towns, they kept delivering the regulations that the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem had decided on, and that the Gentiles were to obey.^a (5) So the churches continued to grow stronger in the faith, and they were increasing in numbers every day.

The Call to Europe

(6) Then Paul and his companions traveled through the region of Phrygia and Galatia.^b For the Holy Spirit had forbidden them to proclaim the message in the province of Asia.^c (7) And when they came to the border of Mysia,^d they kept trying to enter Bithynia.^e But the Spirit of Jesus would not let them do this. (8) So they skirted Mysia and went down to Troas.^f

(9) One night, Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia^g standing before him. "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" he kept pleading. (10) So after Paul had seen this vision, we^h lost no time in trying to get to Macedonia. For we came to the conclusion that Godⁱ had called us to proclaim the good news to the people there.

The Good News Reaches Philippi

(11) Now after we set sail from Troas, we made a straight run to Samothrace,^j and the next day to Neapolis.^k (12) From there, we traveled to Philippi,^l which is a leading city in that part of Macedonia^m and a Roman colony. And we stayed there for some time.

(13) On the Sabbath, we went outside the city gate and made our way along the river to what we thought would be a place of prayer. Then we sat down and started speaking to the women who had gathered there. (14) Among them was a God-fearing woman from Thyatiraⁿ named Lydia, who was a dealer in purple cloth. As

she was listening, the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. (15) And after she and her family were baptized, she pleaded with us and said, "If you have decided that I am a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my home." And she persuaded us to do it.

Paul Heals a Girl with a Demon

(16) On one occasion, a slave girl met us as we were going to the place of prayer. She had a spirit that gave her the ability to predict the future, and she made a large amount of money for her owners by telling fortunes. (17) This girl kept following Paul and the rest of us around. "These men are servants of the Most High God!" she continued to cry. "They are telling you^o about a way to be saved."

(18) Now after she had carried on like this for many days, Paul became annoyed. Finally, he turned to the spirit and said, "In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to come out of her!" And the spirit left her at that very moment. (19) But when her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone, they grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities in the forum.^p (20) And as soon as they had brought them before these officials, they complained, "These men are throwing our city into confusion. They are Jews (21) and are advocating customs that are unlawful for us Romans to adopt or practice."

Singing At Midnight

(22) With that, the crowd joined in the attack. So the officials ripped Paul and Silas' clothes off and began giving orders for them to be flogged with rods. (23) And after they had received many blows, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to keep them under tight security.

(24) Now because he had received such a harsh command, the jailer put them in the inner dungeon and secured their feet in the stocks. (25) But about midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. (26) Suddenly, there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. Every door in the prison was instantly wrenched open, and the chains on all the prisoners came loose.

(27) When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors standing open, he assumed that the prisoners had escaped. So he drew his sword and was about to kill himself. (28) But Paul called out in a loud voice, "Don't harm yourself! We're all here!" (29) At this, the jailer requested lights, and he rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. (30) Then he brought them outside and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

(31) "Believe on the Lord Jesus,"^q they responded, "and you and your family will be saved." (32) Then they proclaimed the Lord's^f message to him and to everyone in his home. (33) And at that hour of the night, the jailer took them and washed their wounds, and he and all his family were baptized without delay. (34) After this, he brought Paul and Silas up into his home and gave them a meal. And he

and his whole family were filled with joy because of their new faith in God.

Paul and Silas Released from Prison

(35) When daylight came, the officials dispatched their police officers with the order: “Release those men!” (36) And the jailer reported these instructions to Paul: “The officials have sent word for you and Silas to be released. Now you can leave us and go in peace.”

(37) But Paul said to the officers, “They beat us publicly and threw us into prison without a trial—even though we are Roman citizens! And now are they trying to get rid of us and hush it up? Never! Let them come in person and escort us out!”

(38) When the police officers reported these words to the officials, and they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed. (39) So they came to them and apologized. Then they escorted them out of the prison and repeatedly asked them to leave the city.

(40) Now after Paul and Silas left the prison, they went to Lydia’s home, where they met with the brothers and spoke words of encouragement to them. And with that, they departed.

^a See Acts 15:23-29. ^b This region was located in western and central Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). ^c *Asia* was an important Roman province in western Asia Minor. Its principal city was Ephesus. ^d *Mysia* occupied the extreme northwestern peninsula of Asia Minor and bordered the Hellespont and the Sea of Marmara. It was a region within the province of Asia. ^e *Bithynia* was a Roman province in northwestern Asia Minor that bordered the Black Sea. ^f *Troas* was an important port and a Roman colony on the eastern shore of the Aegean Sea. ^g *Macedonia* was a Roman province on the northern fringe of Greece. So God was calling Paul to take the message of Jesus Christ into Europe for the first time. ^h This is the first of the famous “we passages” in the book of Acts. These sudden transitions from the use of *they* to the use of *we* probably mark the points in the narrative when Luke joined Paul’s party. ⁱ Some manuscripts read *the Lord*. ^j *Samothrace* is a mountainous island in the Aegean Sea that rises to an altitude of five thousand feet. ^k *Neapolis* was a town on the Macedonian coast that functioned as the port for Philippi. ^l *Philippi* received its name from Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great. It was a leading city in Macedonia and a Roman colony. ^m Some manuscripts read *which is a city of the first District of Macedonia*. ⁿ *Thyatira* was located across the Aegean Sea in the province of Asia. This city was famous for its purple dye. ^o Some manuscripts read *us*. ^p Or *the marketplace*. ^q Some manuscripts read “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*,”. ^r Some manuscripts read *God’s*.

CHAPTER 17

The Good News Reaches Thessalonica

(1) Then Paul and Silas took the road through Amphipolis^a and Apollonia,^b and they came to Thessalonica,^c where there was a Jewish synagogue. (2) As usual, Paul entered the synagogue, and for three Sabbaths, he discussed the scriptures with the people. (3) He kept explaining these scriptures by citing evidence that the Christ^d had to suffer and rise from the dead. “This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ!” he told them.

(4) Now some of the people were persuaded to join Paul and Silas, especially a large group of God-fearing Greeks and many leading women.^e

The Riot at Thessalonica

(5) But the Jews were jealous. So after they had rounded up some scoundrels who hung out in the marketplace,^f they formed a mob, started a riot in the city, and raided Jason’s^g house. They did this in an attempt to locate Paul and Silas and bring them before the popular assembly.^h (6) But when they failed to find them, they proceeded to drag Jason and some of the other brothers before the city officials. “These fellows who have turned the worldⁱ upside down have come here too!” they cried. (7) “And Jason has welcomed them as his guests. All of them are defying Caesar’s decrees by claiming that there is another King named Jesus!”

(8) When the people and the city officials heard these words, they were confused.

(9) But after Jason and the others had paid bail, they let them go.

The Good News Reaches Berea^j

(10) During the night, the brothers sent Paul and Silas off to Berea without delay, and as soon as they arrived, they made their way to the Jewish synagogue. (11) Now these people were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica. They were very eager to receive the message, and they kept examining the scriptures every day to find out if the things Paul said were true. (12) So many of them became believers, including a large number of prominent Greeks, both men and women.

(13) But as soon as the Jews in Thessalonica realized that Paul was preaching God’s message in Berea, they followed him there to agitate the crowds and stir them up. (14) So the brothers immediately sent Paul away to the coast, while Silas and Timothy remained in Berea.

The Good News Reaches Athens

(15) Now the men who were escorting Paul brought him as far as Athens,^k and

after they had received his instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him as quickly as possible, they went on their way.

(16) While Paul was waiting for his fellow workers in Athens, he was aghast to see that the city was full of idols. (17) So he began holding discussions in the synagogue with Jewish and Gentile worshipers, as well as every day in the forum^l with the people who happened to be there. (18) And there was also a group of Epicurean^m and Stoicⁿ philosophers who were debating him. “What is this babbler with his scraps of wisdom trying to say?” some of them were asking. “He seems to be promoting foreign gods,” others responded. (They said this because Paul was proclaiming the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.)

(19) So they brought him before the Areopagus.^o “We would like to know what this new teaching is that you are talking about,” they told him. (20) “You are bringing us some ideas that sound very strange, and we want to know what they mean.” (21) (All the people in Athens, including the foreigners who live there, have time for only one amusement—to talk or hear about something new.)

(22) Then Paul stood up in the middle of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I can see that in every way, you are very religious. (23) For as I was walking around and examining your objects of worship, I even found an altar with the inscription, ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.’

Now my proclamation concerns what you worship in ignorance. (24) The God Who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth. He does not live in temples made by hands, (25) nor is He served by human hands, as if He needs anything. And yet He Himself provides all people with life and breath and every other blessing. (26) From one human being,^p He made every nation of humanity.^q He gave them homes over all the earth, and He fixed the periods of history and the territories they live in. (27) God did this so they would search for Him, and hopefully grope around and find Him—even though He is not far from any of us. (28) ‘For in Him, we live and move and have our being.’^r As some of your own poets have put it, ‘For we are also His children.’^s

(29) And since we are God’s children, we should not think that the Deity is like gold or silver or stone—an object that a human being has shaped by his own skill and imagination. (30) In earlier times, God overlooked such ignorance. But now He is commanding all people everywhere to repent. (31) For He has set a day when He will judge the world with righteousness by the Man He has appointed. And by raising that Man from the dead, He has provided everyone with a valid reason to believe.

(32) When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them started making a joke of it, while others said, “We will listen to you speak about this topic another time.”^t (33) At that point, Paul left the assembly. (34) But some of the men joined him and became believers. Among them were Dionysius, who was a member of the Areopagus, a woman named Damaris, and a number of other people.

^a *Amphipolis* was located about 33 miles southwest of Philippi, along the Egnatian Way. ^b Paul and Silas traveled about 30 miles further along the Egnatian Way to Apollonia. Apparently, Amphipolis and Apollonia were towns where travelers along this route could spend the night. ^c *Thessalonica* (modern Salonika) was located about 37 miles west of Apollonia. Cassander, who served as a general in the army of Alexander the Great, founded this city in 315 B.C. and named it after his wife, Thessalonike. ^d The Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. This applies to each use of *Christ* in verse 3. ^e Or *and the wives of many leaders*. ^f Or *the forum*, ^g According to verse 7, Jason allowed Paul and Silas to stay in his home while they were in Thessalonica. It seems that he was a Jewish Christian, but we know nothing more about him, unless he is to be identified with the Jason mentioned in Rom. 16:21. ^h Or *the people*. ⁱ The Greek term that has been translated *world* refers to the inhabited world. See also verse 31. ^j *Berea* (modern Verria) was located about 60 miles southwest of Thessalonica. Although Berea was a Macedonian city, it was close to the border with the province of Achaia, which comprised classical Greece. So Paul and Silas were on the verge of taking the good news into the great hub of Greek culture. ^k Perhaps Paul was taken to the Aegean coast to confuse his enemies, or perhaps he boarded a ship there. However, his destination lay to the south in Athens, where he waited for Silas and Timothy to join him. Although this city was under Roman rule in the first century A.D., it functioned as the intellectual center of the world at that time, and it is still the capital of Greece today. ^l Or *the marketplace* ^m The followers of Epicurus (342-270 B.C.) did not believe in any form of life after death, and they held that if gods existed, they took no interest in this world. For the Epicureans, true meaning in life was found in pleasure, which they defined as the absence of pain and superstitious fear. ⁿ The Stoics took their name from the painted stoa (portico), where their founder, Zeno (340-260 B.C.), used to teach. They stressed rationalism, self-sufficiency, high morals, and a strong sense of duty. For the Stoics, being the master of circumstances and showing indifference to both pleasure and pain constituted true wisdom. This type of philosophy led to outward correctness of behavior, but also to great personal pride and a condescending attitude toward others. Theologically, the Stoics were pantheists who believed in a world-soul or divine mind that pervaded the entire universe. ^o The *Areopagus* was the Athenian city council, which often met to evaluate the merits of various moral and religious doctrines. Apparently, it was for this purpose that the members of the council granted Paul a hearing. The Areopagus took its name from the *Hill of Ares*, where the council met in early times. ^p Some manuscripts read *From one genetic line*, (literally, *From one blood*). ^q The Greek term that has been translated *humanity*, *human being*, or *people* in verses 26, 29, and 30 is gender inclusive. ^r This is a quotation from the Cretan poet Epimenides (sixth-fifth century B.C.). ^s Paul's second quotation is taken from the Cilician poet, Aratus (third century B.C.), and perhaps also from the Stoic, Cleanthes (third century B.C.). ^t Although most cultured Greeks, with the exception of the Epicureans, were prepared to accept the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of a corpse seemed ridiculous to them.

CHAPTER 18

The Good News Reaches Corinth

(1) After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth,^a (2) where he met a Jew named Aquila. Aquila was a native of Pontus,^b who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome.^c So Paul paid them a visit, (3) and since they all made tents for a living, he went on to stay with them, and they started working together. (4) Paul also made it his practice to hold discussions in the synagogue every Sabbath, and he tried to persuade both Jews and Greeks.

(5) Now after Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul became totally absorbed in the word^d as he testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ.^e (6) But when they kept opposing him and insulting him, he shook the dust out of his clothes in protest and declared, “Your blood will be on your own heads! I am innocent, and from now on, I will go to the Gentiles.”

(7) So Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the home of Titius Justus,^f who was a worshiper of God. (8) Meanwhile, Crispus,^g the synagogue leader, became a believer in the Lord, along with his entire family. And when they heard Paul, many other Corinthians became believers and were baptized.

(9) One night, the Lord appeared to Paul in a vision and said, “Don’t be afraid! Continue your public speaking, and don’t be silent! (10) For I am with you, and no one will assault you or harm you, because I have many people in this city.” (11) So Paul stayed there for 18 months and continued to teach the word of God among the people.

Paul’s Trial before Gallio

(12) But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia,^h the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the judgment seat. (13) “This fellow is inciting the peopleⁱ to worship God in a way that is illegal,” they declared. (14) Now just as Paul was about to respond, Gallio said to the Jews, “Listen Jews! If this case involved some crime or vicious fraud, it would be reasonable for me to accept your complaint. (15) But since it concerns arguments about doctrine and names and your own law—deal with it yourselves! I have no desire to be a judge of such matters.” (16) And he drove them away from the judgment seat. (17) Then all the people^j grabbed Sosthenes,^k the synagogue leader, and began to beat him right in front of the judgment seat. But Gallio remained unfazed by it.

The Return Journey

(18) So Paul stayed in Corinth for quite some time. Then he said goodbye to the

brothers and sailed for Syria, with Priscilla and Aquila as his companions. But before he set sail, he had his hair cut off at Cenchrea¹ to fulfill a vow he had taken.

(19) When they arrived in Ephesus,^m Paul left Priscilla and Aquila behind and entered the synagogue to have a discussion with the Jews. (20) And even though they kept asking him to spend more time with them, he declined. (21) But as he told them goodbye, he added, “If it is God’s will, I will come back to you.” With that, he set sail from Ephesus, (22) and after he landed at Caesarea, he went up to Jerusalemⁿ to greet the church and then down to Antioch.^o

Paul’s Third Missionary Journey

(23) Now after spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out on a journey that took him from place to place in the regions of Galatia and Phrygia,^p where he brought new strength to all the disciples.

Apollos Preaches in Ephesus and Achaia

(24) Meanwhile, a Jew named Apollos arrived in Ephesus. He was a native of Alexandria^q and an eloquent speaker, with a deep knowledge of the scriptures, (25) and he had received oral instruction in the Way of the Lord. Although he was only acquainted with John’s baptism,^r he used to speak and teach about Jesus with glowing enthusiasm and in a correct manner.

(26) Now Apollos began to speak boldly in the synagogue, and after Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside^s and explained the Way of God^t more accurately to him. (27) Later, when he wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers wrote to the disciples there and urged them to welcome him. And from the time he arrived, he provided valuable help to those who through the grace of God had become believers. (28) For in his public debates, he vigorously refuted the Jews by proving from the scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.

^a *Corinth* was a major city in southern Greece that was well-known for its sexual immorality. It was located on a land bridge (the Isthmus of Corinth) that connects the Greek mainland with the southern peninsula (the Peloponnesus).

^b *Pontus* was a Roman province in northern Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) that bordered the Black Sea. ^c In his *Life of Claudius*, the Roman historian Suetonius states that Emperor Claudius ordered all the Jews to leave Rome because they “were indulging in constant riots at the instigation of Chrestus.” Since *Chrestus* is almost certainly a variant of *Christus* (Christ), this statement suggests that the good news was already penetrating the Jewish synagogues in Rome and causing extreme dissension. ^d Some manuscripts read *totally absorbed in the Spirit*. ^e The Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. See also verse 28.

^f Some manuscripts read *Titus Justus*, while others simply read *Justus*. ^g In 1 Cor. 1:14, Paul mentions that he baptized Crispus. ^h *Achaia* was the Roman province that comprised classical Greece, and its capital was Corinth. *Gallio* was the brother of the Stoic philosopher, Seneca the younger, and the son of

the rhetorician, Seneca the elder. Inscriptional evidence indicates that Gallio was proconsul of Achaia from July 1, 51 to July 1, 52, or possibly from July 1, 52 to July 1, 53.ⁱ The Greek term that has been translated *people* is gender inclusive.^j Some manuscripts read *all the Greeks*.^k In 1 Cor. 1:1, Paul refers to a “brother” named Sosthenes. Most likely, this was the same person as Sosthenes, the synagogue leader. So it seems probable that two Corinthian synagogue leaders, Crispus and Sosthenes, eventually became Christians.^l *Cenchrea* was Corinth’s eastern port. It served the Aegean and Black Sea regions, as well as the eastern Mediterranean.^m *Ephesus* was a famous port city on the west coast of Asia Minor and the capital of the Roman province of Asia.ⁿ Although the words *to Jerusalem* do not appear in the original text, they have been added for clarification.^o Once again, Paul had returned to Syrian Antioch, where he began his journey.^p *Phrygia* was a region in west-central Asia Minor, but *Galatia* is more poorly defined. Some expositors believe that Paul made another visit to Lycaonia, which was included in the southern part of the Roman province of Galatia, while other expositors believe that the actual country of Galatia in northern Asia Minor is intended.^q *Alexandria* was a large and very cosmopolitan city in the Nile delta region of Egypt.^r John’s baptism stood in contrast to baptism in the name of Jesus. See Acts 19:3-5. But this statement also seems to imply a very rudimentary knowledge of Christian theology. For example, some of the disciples who had received John’s baptism were unaware that the Holy Spirit existed. See Acts 19:1-2.^s Or *took him home*^t Some manuscripts simply read *the Way*.

CHAPTER 19

The Good News Reaches Ephesus

(1) While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul traveled through the upland region^a and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. (2) “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” he asked them. “No,” they replied. “We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” (3) “Then what kind of baptism did you receive?” Paul asked. “John’s baptism,” they answered. (4) “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance,” Paul responded. “He told the people to believe in the One Who was coming after him—that is, in Jesus.”

(5) Now when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. (6) And after Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they started speaking in other languages and prophesying. (7) There were about twelve men in this group.

(8) Then Paul entered the synagogue, and for three months, he continued to speak boldly, while he held discussions with the people and tried to persuade them about the kingdom of God. (9) But when some of them became stubborn and unbelieving, and publicly slandered the Way, he withdrew from them; he took the

disciples with him and had daily discussions in the lecture hall of Tyrannus.^b (10) This went on for two years, with the result that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

The Sons of Sceva

(11) What is more, God was performing extraordinary miracles through Paul. (12) When bandannas or aprons that had touched his skin were taken to the sick, their diseases were cured, and evil spirits came out of them. (13) Then a group of wandering Jewish exorcists tried their hand at using the name of the Lord Jesus on people who were demon-possessed. They would say, “In the name of that Jesus Whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.”

(14) On one occasion, seven sons of a Jewish chief priest^c named Sceva were doing this, (15) and the evil spirit answered them, “I know Jesus, and I’m acquainted with Paul, but who are you?” (16) Then the man with the evil spirit jumped on them and completely overpowered them. He attacked them with such violence that they fled from the house naked and wounded.

(17) Now when all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks, heard about this incident, they were overcome with awe, and the name of the Lord Jesus was praised. (18) Many of the new believers came forward and openly confessed their magical practices. (19) In fact, a large number of people who had practiced magic brought their scrolls together and started burning them in front of everyone. And when they calculated the value of these scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas.^d (20) So the word of the Lord continued to spread and grow in power.

Paul’s Plans for the Future

(21) Now after these things had happened, Paul decided to travel through Macedonia and Achaia, and then go on to Jerusalem.^e “And after I have been there, I must also visit Rome,” he said. (22) So he sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed on in the province of Asia for a period of time. (23) And during that period, the Way provoked a serious disturbance.

The Riot at Ephesus

(24) There was a silversmith named Demetrius who used to provide the Ephesian^f craftsmen with a large amount of business by making silver models of the temple of Artemis.^g (25) And he called a meeting of these craftsmen and some other people who performed similar work. “Men,” he said, “you are aware that our prosperity depends on this business. (26) But as you can see and hear, this fellow Paul has turned away a considerable number of people, both here in Ephesus and in almost the entire province of Asia. He has convinced them that man-made gods are not gods at all.

(27) Now this poses a danger, not only that our business will be discredited, but that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be treated with contempt. Then it will not be long before the goddess herself, who is worshiped all over the province of Asia and the world,^h has her majesty reduced to nothing.”

(28) When they heard this, they became enraged and started shouting, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” (29) Soon the entire city was filled with confusion, and after the mob had grabbed Gaius and Aristarchus—Paul’s traveling companions from Macedonia—they made a common rush into the theater. (30) Now Paul wanted to address the assembly,ⁱ but the disciples wouldn’t let him. (31) And even some of the officials from the province of Asia who were Paul’s friends sent a message to him, urging him not to risk going into the theater.

(32) Meanwhile, some were shouting one thing and some another. For the assembly was in confusion, and most of the people had no idea why they had come together. (33) Some of them concluded that Alexander was the problem,^j since the Jews had pushed him to the front. Then Alexander motioned for silence and tried to defend himself before the assembly. (34) But when they realized that he was a Jew, they all continued to shout in unison, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians.” And they kept it up for about two hours.

(35) Finally, the city clerk quieted the crowd and said, “Men of Ephesus, isn’t everyone in the world aware that our city serves as the temple guardian for the great Artemis and for her image that fell from Zeus?^k (36) Now since these facts are beyond dispute, you must be calm and not do anything rash. (37) For these men you brought here are not temple robbers, nor do they blaspheme our goddess. (38) So if Demetrius and his craftsmen have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open, and proconsuls are available! Let them trade their accusations there! (39) And if you are looking for an answer to some further problem, it will have to be settled in a legal assembly.^m (40) As things stand, we really are in danger of being charged with rioting for today’s events, since there is no good reason we can give to justify this mob action.” (41) And with that, he dismissed the assembly.

^a Or *the interior*. ^b Some manuscripts add *from the fifth hour until the tenth hour (from eleven o’clock in the morning until four o’clock in the afternoon)*. ^c Although it is possible that Sceva descended from one of the high-priestly families, it is more likely that he was a self-styled “chief priest.” ^d Inasmuch as a drachma was equivalent to a denarius (the usual daily wage for an average worker), this was an enormous sum of money. ^e Paul intended to cross the Aegean Sea and circle around through the two Roman provinces on the Greek peninsula before traveling eastward to Jerusalem. ^f Although the word *Ephesian* does not appear in the original text, it has been added for clarification. ^g The temple of the Ephesian goddess Artemis was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Demetrius sold small silver representations of this temple that contained miniature images of the goddess. ^h The Greek term that has been translated *world* refers to the inhabited world. ⁱ Or *the people*,—see also verse 33. ^j Or *Some of them gave instructions to Alexander*. ^k The original image of the goddess was probably a

meteorite.^l Some manuscripts read *your*.^m Some manuscripts read *And if you are looking for an answer to other problems, they will have to be settled in a legal assembly*.

CHAPTER 20

Paul Visits Macedonia, Greece, and Troas

(1) When the uproar died down, Paul sent for the disciples and encouraged them. Then he said goodbye and set out on a journey into Macedonia. (2) And after he had traveled through that region and had spoken many encouraging messages to the people, he entered Greece,^a (3) where he stayed for three months. But just as he was about to sail for Syria, the Jews formed a plot against him. So he decided to return through Macedonia.

(4) Paul was accompanied by Sopater (the son of Pyrrhus) from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia. (5) These men went on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas.^b (6) But we set sail from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread^c and joined them five days later in Troas, where we spent seven days.

Paul's Farewell Meeting in Troas

(7) On the first day of the week,^d when we had gathered together to break bread,^e Paul began teaching the people. And since he intended to leave the next morning, he extended his talk until midnight.

(8) Now there were many lamps in the upper room where we were meeting, (9) and a young man named Eutychus, who was sitting on the windowsill, was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul's lecture went on and on. At last, Eutychus was fast asleep, and he fell to the ground from the third floor and was picked up dead. (10) But Paul went down and threw himself on the young man. And as he held him in his arms, he said, "Don't worry! He's alive!"

(11) Then Paul went back upstairs and broke the bread and ate it. And after he had a long conversation with everyone that lasted until dawn, he left. (12) So the people took the boy home alive and were greatly relieved.

The Voyage from Troas to Miletus

(13) Then we went ahead to the ship and sailed for Assos,^f where we were

planning to take Paul on board, since he had made this arrangement because he was going there by foot. (14) And after he met us at Assos, we took him on board and went on to Mitylene.^g (15) The next day, we set sail from Mitylene and arrived off Chios.^h On the following day, we crossed over to Samos,ⁱ and on the day after that, we arrived at Miletus.^j

(16) Now Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus to avoid spending time in the province of Asia. For he was eager to get to Jerusalem by the day of Pentecost, if possible.

Paul's Meeting with the Ephesian Elders

(17) From Miletus, Paul sent a message to Ephesus, calling for the elders of the church. (18) And as soon as they arrived, he said to them, "You are aware of how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I set foot in the province of Asia. (19) I served the Lord with complete humility, amid the tears and trials I endured as the Jews plotted against me. (20) I never shrank from proclaiming anything that would help you, nor from teaching you publicly and from house to house. (21) I kept testifying to Jews and Greeks alike that they should turn to God in repentance and exercise faith in our Lord Jesus.^k

(22) But now I am going to Jerusalem under the compulsion of the Spirit, and I don't know what will happen to me there. (23) I only know that in town after town, the Holy Spirit keeps warning me that chains and troubles are waiting for me. (24) And yet my life is of no real value to me. I just want to complete my mission and finish the assignment I received from the Lord Jesus—to testify to the good news about God's grace. (25) I am the man who went around among you proclaiming the kingdom, and since I know that none of you will see me again, (26) I am giving you my testimony today. I am not responsible if any of you are lost, (27) because I never shrank from proclaiming God's entire plan to you.

(28) So keep yourselves under guard, along with all the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you supervisors.^l Continue to shepherd the church of God,^m which He acquired with His own blood.ⁿ (29) For I know that after I am gone, vicious wolves will force their way in among you and will not spare the flock. (30) And even from your own number, men will arise and teach distorted doctrines to lure away disciples after them. (31) So stay awake! Remember that for three years, I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

(32) And now I am entrusting you to God^o and to the message about His grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who have been sanctified. (33) I never desired anyone's silver, gold, or clothing. (34) All of you know that I worked with these hands of mine to provide for my own needs and the needs of my companions. (35) In everything I did, I showed you the necessity of working hard to help the weak. For we must remember the words of the Lord Jesus: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'^p

(36) When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all the elders and

prayed. (37) And all of them were sobbing as they took him in their arms and started kissing him. (38) What distressed them most was his statement that they would not be seeing him again. Then they escorted him to the ship.

^aAccording to Acts 19:21, Paul was planning to travel from Ephesus to Macedonia and Achaia. *Greece* is simply another name for the Roman province of Achaia. ^b Paul's fellow workers crossed the Aegean Sea and waited for him at Troas, which was located on the northeastern Aegean coast. ^c Or *the days of Unfermentation* ^d If Luke was following the usual Biblical practice of reckoning days from evening to evening, this was a Saturday night meeting. However, some expositors suggest the possibility that Luke followed the Roman midnight to midnight method of reckoning days and that the meeting took place on a Sunday night. ^e This expression can refer to an ordinary meal or to the Lord's Supper. See also verse 11. ^f *Assos* was located on the Aegean Sea, just south of Troas. It seems that Paul and his companions were traveling on a coasting ship that made day trips between the main ports on the eastern Aegean. ^g *Mitylene* was the main city on the large island of Lesbos. ^h *Chios* is an island to the south of Lesbos. ⁱ *Samos* is another island to the southeast of Chios. It is just offshore from the site of Ephesus. It was also the birth place of the famous mathematician, Aristarchus, who was the first known person to propose a heliocentric solar system. ^j *Miletus* was an Aegean port that was located about 40 miles south of Ephesus. ^k Some manuscripts read *our Lord Jesus Christ*. ^l Traditionally, *bishops*—in the New Testament church, the terms *elder* and *supervisor* (bishop) had the same meaning. Both terms were commonly used to refer to the pastors of local congregations. ^m Some manuscripts read *the Lord's church*. ⁿ Or *with the blood of His own Son*. ^o Some manuscripts read *to the Lord*. ^p Or *'There is more happiness in giving than in receiving.'* Although this statement does not appear in any of the Gospels, it is fully in line with the spirit of Jesus' teaching.

CHAPTER 21

The Return Journey

(1) Now after we had torn ourselves away from them, we set sail and made a straight run to Cos.^a The next day we continued on to Rhodes,^b and from there to Patara.^c (2) At Patara, we found a ship that was bound for Phoenicia, so we got on board and sailed away. (3) And after we sighted Cyprus and passed to the south of it, we continued our voyage to Syria and landed at Tyre,^d where the ship was to unload its cargo.

(4) While we were there, we cased out the disciples and spent a week with them. And through the Spirit, they tried to tell Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. (5) But when our time there was over, we started on our way, and all the disciples with their wives and children escorted us to the city's edge, where we knelt on the beach and prayed. (6) And after we said goodbye to one another, we got on the ship, while they returned to their homes.

(7) So we completed our voyage from Tyre and arrived at Ptolemais,^e where we greeted the brothers and stayed with them for one day. (8) But in the morning, we set out again and went to Caesarea, where we stayed in the home of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven.^f (9) He had four unmarried daughters who possessed the gift of prophecy.

(10) Now during our lengthy stay there, a prophet named Agabus^g came down from Judea. (11) And after he approached us, he took Paul's belt and tied his own feet and hands with it. Then he said, "These are the words of the Holy Spirit: 'In this way, the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and hand him over to the Gentiles.'"

(12) When we heard this, we and the local disciples started begging Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. (13) But he replied, "What are you doing—crying and weakening my resolve?^h I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." (14) And since he could not be persuaded, we gave up and said, "May the Lord's will be done." (15) So after our time in Caesarea,ⁱ we got ready and began making our way up to Jerusalem.

(16) Now some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us, and they directed us to the home of Mnason,^j where we were to stay as guests. He was a native of Cyprus and had been a disciple since the early days.

Paul Visits James^k in Jerusalem

(17) When we arrived in Jerusalem, the brothers welcomed us warmly, (18) and the next day, we went with Paul to visit James. Now since all the elders were present, (19) Paul greeted them and then proceeded with a detailed description of each of the things God had accomplished among the Gentiles through his ministry. (20) And when they heard Paul's words, they began praising God.

Then they said to him, "Brother Paul, you can see how many tens of thousands of believers there are among the Jews, and all of them are zealots for the law. (21) But they have been informed that you are teaching all the Jews who live in the Gentile countries to abandon Moses, and that you are telling them not to circumcise their children or follow our customs. (22) So what should we do? They are bound to hear that you have come.^l

(23) This is our proposal. We have four men here who have made a vow.^m (24) Take them with you; go through the purification ceremony with them, and pay for the shaving of their heads. Then everyone will know that there is no truth to these rumors about you, but that you yourself are following the law. (25) Now as for the Gentiles believers, we sent them that letterⁿ outlining our decision that they should abstain from meat that has been offered to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals,^o and from sexual immorality."

Paul Is Arrested

(26) So the next day, Paul took the men and went through the purification ceremony with them. Then he entered the temple to announce the date when the time of purification would end and the sacrifice would be offered for each of them.

(27) But when the seven days were almost over, some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul in the temple and began to agitate the entire crowd. Then they grabbed him (28) and yelled, “Men of Israel, help! Here is the fellow who keeps teaching everyone everywhere to turn against our people, our law, and this temple. What is more, he even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.” (29) (They had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with Paul, and they were assuming that Paul had taken him into the temple.)

(30) At this, the whole city was thrown into chaos, and the people formed a mob. They grabbed Paul and started dragging him out of the temple, and immediately, the doors were locked. (31) But while they were trying to kill him, a report reached the tribune^p who commanded the Roman battalion that all of Jerusalem was in an uproar. (32) So he quickly took some soldiers and centurions^q and rushed down on the mob.

Now as soon as the rioters saw the tribune and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. (33) Then the tribune came up and arrested Paul, and ordered that he be bound with two chains. “Who is this man,” he began inquiring, “and what has he done?” (34) Some of the people kept shouting one thing and some another, and since the tribune couldn’t arrive at the truth because of the uproar, he gave orders for Paul be taken into the barracks.

(35) When Paul reached the steps, the crowd was so violent that he had to be carried by the soldiers. (36) For the mob of people kept following them and yelling, “Away with him!”

Paul Tries to Defend Himself

(37) Now just as the soldiers were about to take Paul into the barracks, he asked the tribune, “Am I allowed to speak with you?” “Do you know Greek?” the tribune responded. (38) “Then you’re not that Egyptian who stirred up a rebellion and led four thousand terrorists out into the desert some time ago.” (39) “I am a Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia,” Paul replied. “I am a citizen of an important city. Please let me speak to the people.”

(40) So after the tribune had given his permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the people with his hand. And as soon as they were quiet, he addressed them in Aramaic:

^a *Cos* is a small island just off the southwest coast of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). ^b *Rhodes* is a much larger island to the southeast of *Cos*. ^c *Patara* was a city on the coast of the Roman province of Lycia in southwestern Asia Minor. ^d *Tyre* was a port on the coast of Phoenicia. It is still a well-known city in Lebanon today. ^e *Ptolemais* was the southernmost port in Phoenicia. It was also a Roman colony. ^f See Acts 6:5 for a list of the seven deacons. ^g *Agabus* is also mentioned in Acts 11:28. ^h Literally, *crying and breaking my heart*?—instead of referring to sorrow, this expression denotes a breaking of resolve. ⁱ Although the words *in Caesarea* do not appear in the original text, they have been added for clarification. ^j We know nothing about *Mnason* except that he was an early disciple. ^k This was Jesus' brother James. See also verse 18. ^l Some manuscripts add *and then there will have to be a meeting of the whole church*. The meaning of the Greek is uncertain, but this free translation probably captures its gist. ^m This was the Nazirite vow. It seems that these four men had taken the vow and had then contracted some form of ceremonial defilement that required a purification ritual in the temple. This purification ritual lasted eight days. On the seventh day, the men were considered clean after their heads were shaved, but they still had to bring a sacrifice on the eighth day. (See Num. 6:1-21.) Paul agreed to participate in the purification ritual with them. ⁿ The contents of this letter are recorded in Acts 15:23-29. ^o Some manuscripts omit *from the meat of strangled animals*. ^p Roman tribunes held a higher rank than centurions. Tribunes commanded battalions of about 600 soldiers. The Roman battalion in Jerusalem was stationed in the fortress of Antonia, just northwest of the temple complex. Two flights of steps led down from the fortress and allowed speedy access to the outer court of the temple. ^q Roman centurions commanded approximately 100 soldiers. There were probably several centurions on duty in Jerusalem. ^r Several years earlier, an Egyptian Jew had uttered a prophecy that the walls of Jerusalem would collapse, after which, he and his rebel followers would capture the city. When these rebels were routed by the Roman army, their leader escaped and disappeared. The tribune assumed that the mob, angry at being duped, had now apprehended this false prophet and rebel leader.

CHAPTER 22

(1) “Brothers and fathers, listen to my defense.” (2) When they heard Paul speaking to them in Aramaic, they became even more quiet. Then he continued: (3) “I am a Jew who was born in Tarsus in Cilicia. But I was brought up in this city and educated under Gamaliel.^a I was thoroughly trained in the strict ways of our ancestral law, and I was as much a zealot in the service of God as all of you are today. (4) I persecuted this Movement^b to the point of death, chaining up men and women and putting them in prison, (5) as the high priest and the whole council of elders can testify. They even gave me letters to our Jewish brothers in Damascus, and I set out to chain up the believers who were there and bring them back to Jerusalem for punishment. (6) But about noon, as I was on the road and nearing Damascus, a great light from the sky suddenly flashed around me.

(7) And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ (8) ‘Who are You, Lord?’ I asked. ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, Whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord told me. (9) Although my companions saw the light, they did not understand the voice of the One Who was speaking to me.

(10) Then I asked, ‘What should I do, Lord?’ And the Lord replied, ‘Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told about all the things I have arranged for you to do.’ (11) But because the brilliance of the light had blinded me, my companions led me by the hand into Damascus.

(12) Now there was a man in that city who was a devout observer of the law, with a good reputation among all the Jews who lived there. His name was Ananias, (13) and when he came to visit me, he stood by my side and said, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight.’ And at that moment, I could see him. (14) Then he added, ‘The God of our ancestors^c has already chosen you to know His will, to see Righteous One,^d and to hear Him speak. (15) For you will be His witness to people^e everywhere, and you will tell them what you have seen and heard. (16) So what are you waiting for? Get up; be baptized, and wash away your sins by calling on His name.’

(17) When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, a trance came over me, (18) and I saw the Lord. ‘Quick!’ He told me. ‘Get out of Jerusalem at once, because its people will not accept your testimony about Me.’ (19) ‘Lord,’ I replied, ‘they are aware that I went from synagogue to synagogue, imprisoning and beating those who believe in You. (20) And when the blood of Your witness Stephen was being shed, I was standing there, giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were murdering him.’ (21) But the Lord said to me, ‘You must go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’”

The Tribune Questions Paul

(22) Now the people were listening to Paul until he said that. Then they raised their voices and began to shout, “Rid the earth of such a fellow! He’s not fit to live!” (23) While they were screaming and waving their clothes and throwing dust in the air, (24) the tribune^f gave orders for Paul to be taken into the barracks. Then he directed the soldiers to flog Paul and question him, so they could find an explanation for the people’s outcry against him. (25) But as they stretched him out to flog him, Paul asked the centurion^g who was standing there, “Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn’t been found guilty?”

(26) When the centurion heard this, he went to the tribune and reported Paul’s words. “Do you realize what you are about to do?” he asked. “That man is a Roman citizen!” (27) So the tribune went and asked Paul, “Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?” “Yes, I am,” Paul answered. (28) “Well I paid a lot of money for my citizenship!” the tribune exclaimed. “Oh, but I was born a citizen!” Paul replied.

(29) At this, the soldiers who were about to question Paul quickly backed away

from him. And even the tribune was afraid when he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had put him in chains.

Paul's Hearing before the Sanhedrin

(30) Now since the tribune wanted to find out exactly what Paul was being accused of by the Jews, he released him the next morning and ordered the chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin^h to assemble. Then he brought Paul down and had him stand before them.

^a Rabban Gamaliel the Elder was the leader of the school of Hillel and is still regarded as one of the greatest of the ancient Jewish rabbis. ^b Literally, *this Way* ^c Or *fathers* ^d *The Righteous One* is a Messianic title that refers to Jesus. ^e The Greek term that has been translated *people* is gender inclusive. ^f A tribune commanded a Roman battalion of about 600 soldiers. ^g A centurion commanded approximately 100 Roman soldiers. ^h The Great Sanhedrin (or Great Council) functioned as the highest Jewish court.

CHAPTER 23

(1) Now Paul gazed directly at the Sanhedrin^a and said, “Brothers, I have lived my life with a totally clear conscience before God to this very day.” (2) At that, the high priest Ananias^b ordered the people standing near Paul to punch him in the mouth. (3) “God will punch you, you whitewashed wall!”^c Paul retorted. “How can you sit there and judge me according to the law, while you defy the law by giving an order for me to be punched?”

(4) Then the people who were standing near Paul spoke up. “Are you slandering God’s high priest?” they asked. (5) “Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest,”^d Paul replied. “For it is written, ‘You must not speak evil about a ruler of your people.’”^e

(6) Now Paul was aware that some of the group were Sadducees and the others Pharisees. So he called out in the Sanhedrin, “Brothers, I am a Pharisee and a descendant^f of Pharisees. I am on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead.” (7) When he said this, an argument broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. (8) (For the Sadducees maintain that there is no resurrection, and that there is no such thing as an angel or a spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge all three of them.)

(9) So there was a great commotion, and some of the scribes who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and began to argue vehemently, “We find nothing wrong with this man. What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?” (10) But their argument was becoming violent, and because the tribune^g was afraid that

Paul would be torn to pieces, he ordered the soldiers to come down and take him away from them by force and bring him into the barracks.

(11) That night the Lord stood near Paul and said, “Keep up your courage! You have testified about Me in Jerusalem, and you must do the same in Rome.”

The Plot to Murder Paul

(12) When daylight came, the Jews banded together and placed themselves under a curse if they ate or drank anything before they had killed Paul. (13) More than 40 men were involved in this conspiracy. (14) Then they went to the chief priests and the elders and said, “We have placed ourselves under a curse if we taste any food or drink before we have killed Paul. (15) So it is up to you and the rest of the Sanhedrin to communicate with the tribune and get him to bring Paul down to you. You can use the ruse that you intend to decide his case by conducting a more accurate investigation, and we will be ready to do away with him before he gets to you.”

(16) But the son of Paul’s sister^b heard about this plot, and he went into the barracks and reported it to Paul. (17) Then Paul called one of the centurionsⁱ and told him, “Take this young man to the tribune because he has a message for him.”

(18) So the centurion took him to the tribune and said, “The prisoner Paul asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you.” (19) At this, the tribune took the young man by the hand and withdrew to a place where they could be alone. “What do you have to report?” the tribune inquired. (20) And the young man replied, “The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul before the Sanhedrin tomorrow, and they are using the ruse that they intend to conduct a more accurate inquiry into his case. (21) But don’t let yourself be persuaded by them, because a party of more than 40 men is waiting to ambush him. They have placed themselves under a curse if they eat or drink anything before they have done away with him, and they are ready and waiting for your promise to bring him.”

(22) With that, the tribune sent the young man away. But he cautioned him, “Don’t tell anyone that you have given me this information.”

Paul Is Sent to the Roman Governor

(23) Then the tribune summoned two centurions and said, “Get 200 soldiers ready to leave for Caesarea by nine o’clock tonight,^j along with 70 horsemen and 200 spearmen. (24) Provide Paul with an animal to ride, and escort him safely through to Governor Felix.”^k

(25) The tribune also wrote a letter that went like this:

(26) “From Claudius Lysias.

To the most excellent Governor Felix. Greetings.

(27) The Jews had seized this man and were about to kill him. But when I learned that he was a Roman citizen, I came with the soldiers and rescued him. (28) Now since I wanted to know the exact charge they were bringing against him, I brought him down to their Sanhedrin. (29) However, I discovered that their case involved arguments regarding their own law, and that there was no charge against him that would lead to a death sentence or imprisonment. (30) But after I was informed of a plot to harm him, I sent him to you without delay, and I have also instructed his accusers to state their charges before you.”

(31) So in keeping with their orders, the soldiers took Paul with them during the night and brought him to Antipatris.¹ (32) But the next morning, they let the horsemen ride on with him, while they returned to the barracks.

(33) When the horsemen arrived in Caesarea, they delivered the letter to the governor and handed Paul over to him. (34) Then the governor read the letter and asked what province Paul was from. And when he learned that Paul was from Cilicia, (35) he said, “I will hear your case when your accusers get here.” So he gave orders for Paul to be kept under guard in Herod’s palace.^m

^aThe Great Sanhedrin (or Great Council) functioned as the highest Jewish court. See also verses 6, 15, 20, and 28. ^b *Ananias* became high priest in A.D. 47 and retained the office for eleven or twelve years. This wealthy Sadducee was notorious for his greed and cruelty. ^c This is probably an allusion to Ezek. 13:10-16. Although Paul’s words sound angry, they may have been inspired by the Holy Spirit. When the Jewish-Roman War began in A.D. 66, Ananias was slaughtered by Jewish zealots who opposed his pro-Roman policy. ^d Paul suffered from poor eyesight, and he may not have recognized that the person speaking was the high priest. Or perhaps his words were intended as irony—surely such an unscrupulous person could not be the high priest. ^e Ex. 22:28 ^f Or *son* ^g A tribune commanded a Roman battalion of about 600 soldiers. ^h Very little is known about Paul’s family, and nothing more is known of his nephew or his sister. ⁱ A centurion commanded approximately 100 Roman soldiers. ^j Literally, *by the third hour of the night*, ^k *Antonius Felix* was the governor of Judea from A.D. 52 to A.D. 59. ^l *Antipatris* was located on the Plain of Sharon, about 35 miles northwest of Jerusalem. ^m Literally, *in the Praetorium of Herod*.

CHAPTER 24

Tertullus Accuses Paul before Felix

(1) Now after five days had passed, the high priest Ananias came down to Caesarea with some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus.^a And they brought their case against Paul before the governor. (2) So when Paul was summoned, Tertullus began to press his charges as he spoke these words to Felix: “We are enjoying a great period of peace under your rule, and your plans are bringing improvements to this nation (3) in every way and every place. Yes, most excellent Felix, it is with deepest gratitude that we acknowledge this.^b

(4) But since I have no desire to impose on^c you further, I beg you to hear us briefly with your usual tolerance. (5) We have found this man to be a public plague. He is constantly stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world,^d and he serves as a ringleader in the Nazarene sect.^e (6) What is more, he was even trying to defile the temple when we arrested him.^f (8) By examining him yourself, you will be able to learn about all the charges we are bringing against him.”

(9) Then the other Jews joined in the attack and insisted that the things Tertullus had said were true.

Paul Defends Himself before Felix

(10) Now as soon as the governor motioned for him to speak, Paul responded, “I know that you have been a judge over our nation for many years, and this gives me confidence as I make my defense. (11) You can verify that no more than twelve days have passed since I went up to worship in Jerusalem. (12) My accusers did not find me arguing with anyone. Nor did they find me stirring up a mob in the temple, in the synagogues, or anywhere else in the city. (13) And they cannot prove any of the charges they are bringing against me.

(14) However, I do admit that I am a follower of the New Movement,^g which they call a sect. For this is how I worship the God of our ancestors. I believe everything that agrees with the law and is written in the prophets, (15) and I have the same hope that these men cherish. I believe that God will resurrect the righteous and the wicked. (16) So I always try to keep a clear conscience before God and everyone else.^h

(17) Now after an absence of several years, I arrived in Jerusalem to bring charitable gifts and offerings to my nation. (18) I had just completed the purification ceremony and was involved with these affairs when my accusers found me in the temple. But there was no mob with me, and no uproar was taking place. (19) However, there were some Jews from the province of Asia who should be here to press their charges before you if they have anything against me. (20)

Or these men who are present should state what crime they discovered when I appeared before the Sanhedrinⁱ—(21) unless it was the one thing I shouted when I stood among them: ‘I am on trial before you today because I believe in the resurrection of the dead.’”

(22) Then Felix (who was well informed about the Way) postponed the trial with these words: “When the tribune^j Lysias arrives, I will decide your case.” (23) And he ordered the centurion^k to guard Paul, but to give him some freedom and allow his friends to care for his needs.

Paul Tells Felix about Jesus

(24) Now after several days had passed, Felix arrived with his wife Drusilla,^l who was Jewish. Then he sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus.^m (25) But while Paul was discussing righteousness, self-control, and the coming judgment, Felix became alarmed and said, “That’s enough! You can leave now, and when I have a good opportunity, I will call for you.” (26) At the same time, he was hoping Paul would give him a bribe. So he sent for him as often as possible and continued having conversations with him.

(27) Meanwhile, two years went by, and Felix was replaced by Porcius Festus.ⁿ But because Felix wanted to do the Jews a favor, he left Paul in prison.

^a*Tertullus* is a Latin name that means “third.” Most likely, he was a Hellenistic Jew who was familiar with Roman law. ^b Or . . . and your plans are bringing improvements to this nation. (3) Yes, most excellent Felix, it is with deepest gratitude that we acknowledge this in every way and every place. ^c Or to weary ^d The Greek term that has been translated *world* refers to the inhabited world. ^e that is, the Christian movement ^f Some manuscripts insert *And we wanted to try him according to our own law, (7) but the tribune, Lysias, arrived and used great force to take him out of our hands. (8) Then Lysias gave orders for his accusers to come before you.* ^g Literally, *the Way*. ^h The Greek term that has been translated *everyone else* is gender inclusive. ⁱ The Great Sanhedrin (or Great Council) functioned as the highest Jewish court. ^j A tribune commanded a Roman battalion of about 600 soldiers. ^k A centurion commanded approximately 100 Roman soldiers. ^l *Drusilla* was the daughter of Herod Agrippa I and the great granddaughter of Herod the Great—the king who was ruling when Jesus was born. At an early age, she was married to Azizus, king of Emensa, but Felix lured her away from her husband and married her when she was 16. Their son, also named Agrippa, was killed in A.D. 79 along with his mother when Mount Vesuvius erupted. ^m Some manuscripts simply read *Christ*. The Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. ⁿ *Porcius Festus* was the governor of Judea from A.D. 59 until his death in A.D. 62.

CHAPTER 25

Paul Appeals to Caesar

(1) Now three days after his arrival in the province, Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem. (2) And while he was there, the chief priests and the Jewish leaders informed him of their case against Paul. (3) And they kept urging him to do them a favor by transferring Paul to Jerusalem. For they were preparing an ambush to do away with him along the road.

(4) But Festus replied that he was planning to go to Caesarea soon, and that Paul was being kept in custody there. (5) “Let some of your leaders come down with me,” he told them. “And if the man has done anything wrong, they can press their charges against him in Caesarea.” (6) So Festus spent at most eight or ten days in Jerusalem. Then he returned to Caesarea, and the next day, he took his place on the judgment seat and gave orders for Paul to be brought in.

(7) When Paul appeared, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him and began leveling many serious charges that they couldn’t prove. (8) “I have committed no wrong against the Jewish law or the temple or Caesar!” Paul kept saying in his defense. (9) But because Festus wanted to do the Jews a favor, he asked Paul, “Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me on these charges?”

(10) At this, Paul replied, “I am standing before Caesar’s judgment seat, where I must be tried. I have committed no wrong against the Jews, as you very well know. (11) If I am guilty of anything that deserves the death penalty, I will not try to escape it. But if these men are bringing empty charges against me, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!”^a

(12) Then Festus conferred with his team of advisors and declared, “You have appealed to Caesar, and to Caesar you will go!”

Festus Consults King Agrippa

(13) Some time later, King Agrippa^b and Bernice^c arrived in Caesarea to greet Festus. (14) And since they were spending many days there, Festus explained Paul’s case to the king: “There is a man here who was left in prison by Felix, (15) and when I visited Jerusalem, the chief priests and the Jewish elders informed me about his case and asked that he be condemned. (16) But I told them that it isn’t customary for Romans to hand a person^d over for punishment until he has an opportunity to face his accusers and defend himself against their charges. (17) So after they had assembled here, I lost no time with this case. I took my place on the judgment seat the very next day and gave orders for the man to be brought in.

(18) But when his accusers stood up to speak, they didn't charge him with any of the evil deeds I was expecting. (19) Instead, they had certain arguments with him about their own religion and about some dead Man named Jesus, Who Paul kept insisting is alive.

(20) Now because I was baffled by their debate, I asked Paul if he would like to go to Jerusalem and be tried on these charges. (21) But Paul made an appeal. He asked to be held in custody until the Emperor can decide his case. So I gave orders for him to be kept under guard until I can send him to Caesar."

(22) Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I would like to hear the man myself." "You will hear him tomorrow," Festus replied.

King Agrippa Meets Paul

(23) So the next day, Agrippa and Bernice arrived with great pomp, and along with the tribunes^e and the leading men of the city, they entered the auditorium. Then, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in.

(24) "King Agrippa!" Festus exclaimed, "and all of you who are present with us: You are observing this man! The whole Jewish community, both here and in Jerusalem, has appealed to me, crying out that he should not live any longer. (25) However, I discovered that he has done nothing that deserves the death penalty. But when he made an appeal to the Emperor, I decided to send him to Rome. (26) And yet I have nothing definite to write to our master about him. So this is why I have brought him before all of you, and especially before you, King Agrippa. I am hoping that after our investigation, I will have something to write. (27) For it seems posterous to send a prisoner without indicating the charges against him."

^a As a Roman citizen, Paul had the right to appeal his case to the emperor. ^b Herod Agrippa II was the brother of Drusilla and Bernice. They were the children of Herod Agrippa I and the great grandchildren of Herod the Great—the king who was ruling when Jesus was born. Herod Agrippa II ruled over small territories to the north of Palestine. ^c Bernice was a daughter of Herod Agrippa I. She had a number of sexual relationships with men and ultimately became the mistress of the Roman emperor Titus. ^d The Greek term that has been translated *person* is gender inclusive. ^e A tribune commanded a Roman battalion of about 600 soldiers.

CHAPTER 26

Paul Defends Himself before King Agrippa

(1) Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You have our permission to tell us about yourself.” So Paul stretched out his hand and began his defense: (2) “I consider myself fortunate, King Agrippa, that I can defend myself before you today against all the charges of the Jews, (3) especially since you are an expert on all the Jewish customs and controversies. So I ask you to give me a patient hearing.

(4) The Jews are all aware of the kind of life I have lived since I was a youth, from my early childhood in my own country and also in Jerusalem. (5) They have known me for a long time, and if they were willing, they could testify that I belonged to the strictest sect of our religion. I lived as a Pharisee, (6) and now I am on trial because I have put my hope in God’s promise to our ancestors.^a

(7) Our twelve tribes are hoping to see the fulfillment of this promise as they worship God day and night with intense devotion. And yet it is because of this very hope, O king, that I am being accused by the Jews. (8) Why do any of you consider it unbelievable that God raises the dead?

(9) At one time, I was also convinced that I should do everything I could to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. (10) And that is exactly what I did in Jerusalem. I used the authority I had received from the chief priests to shut up many of God’s holy people in prison, and when they were being executed, I voted against them. (11) On many occasions, I traveled from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to make them commit blasphemy. In my insane anger against them, I even followed them to foreign cities.

(12) Now in the midst of these efforts, as I was traveling to Damascus with the authority and full legal power of the chief priests, (13) I saw a light from the sky that was brighter than the sun. It was noon, O king, and as we were on the road, this light was gleaming all around me and my companions. (14) And after we had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me in the Aramaic language: ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? You are making your life hard by kicking against the goads!’^b

(15) ‘Who are You, Lord?’ I asked. And the Lord replied, ‘I am Jesus, Whom you are persecuting. (16) But get up and stand on your feet, because I have appeared to you for a purpose. I have predestined you to be My servant, and to testify about what you have seen^c and what I will show you. (17) I will continue to rescue you from the Jewish people and the Gentiles. For I am sending you (18) to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and a place among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.’

(19) And so, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. (20) I went to the people of Damascus first, and then to Jerusalem and to the whole region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles. I kept proclaiming that they needed to repent and turn to God, and that they should show their repentance by their deeds.

(21) This is why the Jews seized me in the temple and were trying to kill me. (22) But I have received God's help to the present day. And here I stand, testifying to small and great alike. I am stating only what the prophets and Moses foretold— (23) that the Christ^d would suffer and be the first to rise from the dead, and that He would proclaim His light to both the Jewish people and the Gentiles.”

The Reaction to Paul's Speech

(24) Now as Paul continued to make his defense, Festus shouted at the top of his voice, “You have lost your mind, Paul! Your great learning is driving you mad!”

(25) “I have not lost my mind, most excellent Festus,” Paul replied. “The words I am speaking are true and reasonable. (26) As a matter of fact, the king is aware of these events, and I can speak freely with him. For I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it did not happen in a corner. (27) King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you believe them!”

(28) At this, Agrippa said to Paul, “In short, you are trying to persuade me to become a Christian!”^e (29) “Whether in short or at length,” Paul replied, “I wish to God that not only you, but all the people who are listening to me today would become what I am, except for these chains!”

(30) Then the king got up, along with the governor, Bernice, and the rest of the people who were sitting with them. (31) And as they left the room, they were talking with one another. “This fellow is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment,” they said. (32) And Agrippa commented to Festus, “This fellow could have been released if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

^aOr *fathers*. ^b Jesus was employing a common proverb. Goads were pointed sticks that were used to prick farm animals to make them work harder, and any animal that kicked against these goads would only hurt itself. Jesus' statement implies that for some time, the Holy Spirit had been pricking Saul's conscience in regard to the truthfulness of the Christian message, and that Saul had been putting up vigorous resistance. ^c Some manuscripts read *seen concerning Me*. ^d The Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. ^e The meaning of the Greek is uncertain.

CHAPTER 27

Paul's Journey to Rome

(1) Now as soon as the decision was made that we should sail for Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were handed over to a centurion named Julius,^a who belonged to the Imperial Regiment.^b (2) Then we boarded a ship from Adramyttium^c that was bound for various ports along the coast of the province of Asia.

So we set sail. And Aristarchus,^d a Macedonian from Thessalonica, came with us. (3) On the following day, we landed at Sidon,^e and Julius treated Paul kindly by letting him visit his friends and get what he needed for the voyage.

(4) From Sidon, we set sail again, and because the winds were against us, we made our way along the sheltered side of Cyprus. (5) And after we had crossed the open sea that lies off the coasts of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia.^f (6) There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship that was bound for Italy, and he put us on board.

(7) Now we were sailing slowly for several days, and it was only with difficulty that we arrived off Cnidus.^g At this point, the wind would not let us go any farther in that direction. So starting at Cape Salmone,^h we sailed along the sheltered side of Crete. (8) And as we were hugging the coast, we struggled on to a place called Fair Havens, which is near the town of Lasea.ⁱ

(9) But we had lost a lot of time, and navigation was already dangerous, because the Day of Atonement^j had gone by. So Paul tried to give the crew some advice. (10) "Men," he said, "I can see that this voyage is going to bring disaster and great loss to the cargo, the ship, and even our own lives." (11) But instead of listening to Paul, the centurion was being influenced by the pilot and the owner of the ship. (12) And since that harbor was not a good place to spend the winter, the majority decided to sail on. For they were hoping it might be possible to reach Phoenix^k and spend the winter there. (Phoenix is a Cretan harbor with a southwest and northwest exposure.)

The Great Storm

(13) So when a gentle breeze blew from the south, they thought they could carry out their plan, and they raised the anchor and began to coast along as they hugged the shore of Crete. (14) But after a little while, a typhoon-like wind, called a "Northeaster," rushed down from the island, (15) and because the ship was caught in this gale and could not head into the wind, we gave up and were swept along.

(16) As we passed under the shelter of a small island called Cauda,^l we struggled to get the ship's dinghy under control. (17) And after the men had hoisted it up on the deck, they started using cables to brace the ship. They were also afraid of

drifting into the great sandbank of Syrtis,^m so they lowered the sailsⁿ and allowed the ship to be carried by the wind. (18) But we were taking such a beating from the storm that the next day, they started throwing the cargo overboard, (19) and on the third day, they used their own hands to hurl the ship's gear overboard.

(20) Now there was no glimpse of sun or stars for many days, and the violent storm continued to bear down on us until at last all hope of survival began to fade. (21) Meanwhile, most of the crew had lost their appetite. So Paul stood up among them and said, "Men, if you had heeded my advice not to sail from Crete, you would have avoided this damage and loss. (22) But now I urge you to cheer up, because none of you will lose your lives. Only the ship will be lost.

(23) For last night, an angel of the God to Whom I belong and Whom I constantly serve stood beside me. (24) 'Don't be afraid, Paul,' he said. 'You must stand before Caesar, and God has graciously given you the lives of all the people who are sailing with you.' (25) So cheer up, men! For I have faith in God that everything will turn out exactly as He told me. (26) But we will run aground on some island."

The Shipwreck

(27) Now on the fourteenth night,^o we were being driven across the Adriatic Sea.^p And about midnight, the sailors began to suspect that land was near. (28) So they took a sounding and found that the water was 120 feet deep.^q A little later, they took another sounding and found that the water was 90 feet deep.^r (29) At this point, they were afraid of being wrecked on the rocky coast. So they dropped four anchors from the stern and began to pray for daylight.

(30) But when the sailors tried to escape from the ship by lowering the dinghy into the sea, while pretending that they were about to drop some anchors from the bow, (31) Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay with the ship, you won't be able to survive." (32) So the soldiers cut the ropes that were holding the dinghy and let it fall away.

(33) Now right up to the break of day, Paul kept urging all of them to eat. "For the last two weeks," he said, "you have been in constant suspense and have gone without food. You have not eaten a thing! (34) So I urge you to take some food, because you need it to survive. For not a hair of your heads will perish!" (35) And as soon as he had said this, he took some bread, gave thanks to God in front of everyone, broke it, and began to eat. (36) At this, they were all encouraged, and they helped themselves to the food. (37) (The total number of people on board the ship was 276.^s) (38) And after they had eaten as much as they wanted, they started making the ship lighter by dumping the wheat into the sea.

(39) When daylight came, the sailors did not recognize the land. But little by little, they noticed a bay with a sandy beach, where they planned, if possible, to run the ship aground. (40) So they cut off the anchors and left them in the sea, and at the same time, they unfastened the straps on the rudders. Then they hoisted the

foresail into the wind and began making for the beach.

(41) But they got caught in a place where there were cross currents,⁴ and the ship ran aground. The bow was jammed in and couldn't be moved, while the stern was being pounded to pieces by the violent surf.

(42) Now the soldiers were planning to kill the prisoners to keep them from swimming away and escaping. (43) But because the centurion wanted to save Paul's life, he stopped them from putting their plan into action. Instead, he gave orders that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land, (44) while the rest were to follow on planks or other debris from the ship. And in this way, everyone reached land safely.

^a A centurion commanded approximately 100 Roman soldiers. Except for what is stated in this chapter, nothing definite is known about Julius. See also verses 3, 6, 11, 31, and 43. ^b The identity of this regiment is uncertain. ^c *Adramyttium* was an Aegean port in northwestern Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). ^d *Aristarchus* had already been Paul's traveling companion in Ephesus, Macedonia, and Greece. See Acts 19:29; 20:1-4. ^e *Sidon* was located on the coast of Phoenicia, about 70 miles north of Caesarea. ^f *Myra* was a port on the southern coast of Asia Minor. It was located in Lycia, the southernmost region in the province of Asia. ^g *Cnidus* was located on a peninsula at the southwest corner of Asia Minor, where the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas meet. It was an important port with two harbors. ^h This is a promontory at the eastern end of Crete. ⁱ *Lasea* was a town just east of Fair Havens Harbor on the southern coast of the island of Crete. ^j Literally, *the Fast*—the Jewish Day of Atonement is a day of fasting. ^k *Phoenix* (modern Phineka) lies on the southwestern coast of Crete. During the course of centuries, streams have filled its once fine harbor with silt. ^l Some manuscripts read *Clauda*. The name of this small island that lies just to the south of Crete has been spelled in various ways. ^m *Syrtis* was the name of the gulf that indents the coast of Libya in north Africa. Its shallow water is filled with sandbars that have caused numerous shipwrecks. ⁿ Or *the sea anchor*—the meaning of the Greek is uncertain. ^o This was the fourteenth night since the ship left Fair Havens. By this time, the storm had blown the ship approximately 600 miles to the west. ^p In the first century, the term *Adriatic Sea* included the central Mediterranean. ^q Literally, *20 fathoms deep*. ^r Literally, *15 fathoms deep*. ^s Some manuscripts read *about 76*. ^t Or *they got caught on a sandbar*—the meaning of the Greek is uncertain.

CHAPTER 28

Safe on Malta

(1) As soon as we had made it to safety, we learned that the island was called Malta,^a (2) and the rough islanders were extremely kind to us. For since it was cold and rainy, they built a fire and welcomed all of us over to it.

(3) Now as Paul gathered a bundle of brushwood and put it on the fire, a viper that was driven out by the heat bit his hand. (4) And when the islanders saw the snake hanging from Paul's hand, they started conversing among themselves. "This fellow must be a murderer!" they said. "Even though he was rescued from the sea, the goddess of justice^b won't let him live."

(5) But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no harm. (6) Meanwhile, the people were expecting him to swell up or suddenly drop dead. But after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and began to say that he was a god.

(7) Now there was some land nearby that belonged to the chief official of the island. This man's name was Publius,^c and he welcomed us and entertained us in a friendly way for three days. (8) But his father was sick in bed with recurring fever and dysentery. So Paul paid his father a visit and healed him by praying for him and laying his hands on him. (9) And after this had happened, the other sick people on the island began to come for healing. (10) They also showered us with honors, and when we were about to sail, they gave us the supplies we needed.

From Malta to Rome

(11) When three months had gone by, we set sail in a ship that had stayed at the island for the winter. It was an Alexandrian ship, with a carved figurehead of Zeus' twin children, Castor and Pollux, on its bow.^d (12) Eventually, we landed at Syracuse,^e and after we had stayed there for three days, (13) we raised our anchor^f and continued on to Rhegium.^g The next day, a south wind began to blow, and on the following day, we reached Puteoli,^h (14) where we found some brothers who invited us to spend a week with them. And so we came to Rome.

(15) Now when the brothers in Rome heard about us, they traveled as far as the Forum of Appiusⁱ and the Three Taverns^j to meet us. And as soon as Paul saw them, he thanked God and felt encouraged.

Paul Meets with the Jews in Rome

(16) So we arrived in Rome, where Paul was allowed to live in his own private quarters, with a soldier to guard him.

(17) Three days later, Paul called the local Jewish leaders together. And after they had assembled, he said to them, “Brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors, I was imprisoned in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. (18) They examined me and wanted to set me free, because I was innocent of any crime that deserved the death penalty. (19) But when the Jews kept objecting, I was forced to appeal to Caesar—even though I had no charge to bring against my own people. (20) So this is why I have asked to see you and speak with you. For I am wearing this chain because of my commitment to the hope of Israel.”

(21) At this, they replied, “We have received no letters from Judea about you. And none of the brothers have arrived with a bad report or message about you. (22) However, we think it is only appropriate that you tell us what your views are, for we are aware that people everywhere are speaking against this sect.”

(23) So after they had arranged a day to meet with Paul, an even larger group came to the place where he was staying. And from dawn till dusk, he kept explaining his position to them, as he testified about the kingdom of God and tried from both the law of Moses and the prophets to convince them about Jesus.

(24) Now some of them started to believe the things Paul was saying, while others kept refusing to believe. (25) And without coming to any agreement among themselves, they began to leave, but not before Paul made one final comment: “The Holy Spirit put it well when He spoke to your ancestors^k through the prophet Isaiah! (26) He said,

‘Go to this people and say,
“You will keep listening, but never understand,
and you will keep looking, but never see.
(27) For this people’s mind has become dull;
their ears are hard of hearing,
and they have closed their eyes.
Otherwise, they would see with their eyes,
hear with their ears,
understand with their minds,
and turn to Me for healing.’”^l

(28) So be aware that this salvation from God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen.”^m

Conclusion

(30) For two whole years, Paul lived in his own rented quarters, and he always welcomed everyone who came to visit him. (31) He continued preaching about the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with complete boldness and freedom.

^a *Malta* is a small island that is located in the Mediterranean Sea, directly south of Sicily. The term, *Malta*, means *Refuge* in the original Phoenician language,

and Luke may be suggesting that the island was aptly named. ^b *Justice* was commonly personified as a goddess who avenged the crimes of wrongdoers. ^c Inscriptional evidence indicates that the expression, *chief official of the island*, is itself an official title. Although *Publius* is a Roman name, nothing more is known about this individual. ^d Although the words *Castor and Pollux, on its bow* are not in the original text, they have been added for clarification. ^e *Syracuse* was a major port on the southeast coast of Sicily. ^f The meaning of the Greek is uncertain. Some manuscripts read *we sailed around*. ^g *Rhegium* (modern Reggio) lay at the southern tip of the Italian peninsula. ^h *Puteoli* (modern Pozzuoli) was located on the Bay of Naples, more than 200 miles north of Rhegium. It was the final destination for Alexandrian wheat ships. ⁱ *The Forum of Appius* was a market town on the Appian Way that was 43 miles south of Rome. ^j Although the location of this village is uncertain, it is said to have been 33 miles south of Rome. ^k Or *your fathers*—some manuscripts read *our ancestors*. ^l Isa. 6:9-10 ^m Some manuscripts insert (29) *And after he had said this, the Jews went away, arguing vigorously among themselves.*

STUDY GUIDE

- (1) After Acts 1, we never read about Matthias again. Do you think he was God's choice to replace Judas, or the choice of human beings? Some Bible students have suggested that Jesus eventually chose Saul (Paul) to replace Judas. Do you agree or disagree with that idea? (*Acts 1:15-26; 9:1-19*)
- (2) Did God's people have the Holy Spirit before the day of Pentecost? If they did, what was so special about the events of that day? (*Ps. 51:11; Acts 2:1-13*)
- (3) What were the main features of Peter's messages? What does this tell us about New Testament Christianity? (*Acts 2:14-39; 3:12-16*)
- (4) If the apostolic proclamation (or kerygma) was focused on Christ, what role did the Holy Spirit play?
- (5) Why do you think the apostles' message made the Sadducees angry? (*Matt. 22:23; Acts 4:1-2*)
- (6) Who is the Holy Spirit? (*Acts 5:3-4*)
- (7) Why do you think God punished Ananias and Sapphira so severely? (*Acts 5:1-11*)
- (8) How did God bring good out of Stephen's death and the persecution that followed? (*Acts 8:1-4*)
- (9) Why do you think Jesus chose Saul (Paul) as an apostle? (*Acts 9:1-19*)

- (10) What was God trying to teach Peter in the vision of the unclean animals? (*Acts 10:9-29*)
- (11) Why do you think God allowed James to be killed? Why did God send an angel to rescue Peter? What role did the prayers of the church play in this? (*Acts 12:1-17*)
- (12) How does the language in Acts 13:2 indicate that the Holy Spirit is a Person and not a force?
- (13) Why do you think John Mark deserted Paul and Barnabas? (*Acts 13:13*)
- (14) Do you think the restrictions the Jerusalem council placed on Gentile Christians still apply today? (*Acts 15:19-21; 1 Cor. 8*)
- (15) What lessons can we learn from the quarrel that Paul and Barnabas had? (*Acts 15:36-41*)
- (16) Why was Paul's call to take the good news into Macedonia so significant for the future of Christianity? (*Acts 16:6-10*)
- (17) Why didn't Paul have much success in Athens? (*Acts 17:15-34*)
- (18) Who was Gallio, and how did his decision contribute to the growth of Christianity during the middle years of the first century? (*Acts 18:12-17*)
- (19) Does Paul's meeting with the church at Troas provide Biblical support for Sunday worship among Christians? (*Acts 20:7-12*)
- (20) Why did Paul still feel compelled to visit Jerusalem after the prophet Agabus warned him of his coming arrest in that city? (*Acts 21:10-14*)
- (21) Why didn't Paul recognize the high priest when he was being questioned by the Sanhedrin? (*Acts 23:1-5*)
- (22) Do you think King Agrippa was under conviction regarding the truthfulness of Christianity? What accounts for his seemingly evasive reply to Paul's question? (*Acts 26:27-29*)
- (23) Why does the book of Acts end so abruptly? Do you think Luke concluded the story where he did because he had recounted the history of the Church up to the time he was writing? (*Acts 28:30-31*)

Romans

CHAPTER 1

Greetings from Paul

(1) From Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus.^a I was called as an apostle and appointed to proclaim God's good news, (2) which He had already promised through His prophets in the holy scriptures. (3) This good news is about His Son, Who became a Descendant^b of David in His human nature, (4) and Who, through the Holy Spirit,^c was marked as the mighty Son of God by His resurrection from the dead. I am talking about Jesus Christ our Lord! (5) Through Him and on behalf of His name, we received the gift of our apostolic ministry—to promote the obedience that results from faith among all the Gentiles. (6) And you also are among those who have been called to belong to Jesus Christ.

(7) To all of you in Rome^d who are loved by God and called as His holy people. May you have grace and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's Desire to Visit Rome

(8) First of all, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because the news about your faith is being reported all over the world. (9) For the God I serve with all my heart in proclaiming the good news about His Son is my Witness that I never fail to mention you (10) whenever I pray. I keep praying that somehow, by the will of God, I will finally succeed in coming to visit you. (11) For I long to see you—so I can share some spiritual blessing with you that will make you strong. (12) What I mean is that you and I will be mutually encouraged by our common faith.

(13) Brothers, I want you to be aware that I have often planned to come (although I have been hindered until now), so that I could have a fruitful harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles. (14) I have an obligation to Greeks and to barbarians, to the wise and to the simple-minded. (15) And this is why I am so eager to proclaim the good news to you who are in Rome.

God Reveals His Righteousness

(16) For I am not ashamed of the good news, because it is God's saving power for everyone who believes—for the Jew first, and also for the Greek. (17) In the good news, a righteousness from God is being revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from beginning to end.^e As it is written, "The person who is righteous by faith will live."^f

God Reveals His Holy Anger

(18) God's holy anger is being revealed from heaven against all the impiety and wickedness of human beings,^g who stifle the truth by their wickedness. (19) For what can be known about God is plain to them because God Himself has disclosed it to them. (20) For ever since the world was created, they have been gaining insights into God's invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—by reflecting on the things He made. So they are without excuse.

(21) Although these people knew God, they refused to honor Him as God or give Him thanks. Instead, their thoughts turned to worthless things, and their foolish minds were plunged into darkness. (22) While claiming to be wise, they made fools of themselves (23) and exchanged the splendor of the immortal God for images that looked like mortal human beings and birds and four-footed animals and reptiles. (24) So because they followed the sinful desires of their hearts, God gave them up to sexual impurity and the degrading of their bodies with one another. (25) They exchanged the truth about God for the Lie^h and worshiped and served created things instead of the Creator, Who is praised forever. Amen!

(26) Therefore, God gave them up to shameful passions. For even their females exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. (27) Likewise, their males abandoned natural sexual relations with females and burned with lust for one another. Males engaged in obscenities with other males and brought on themselves the penalty they deserved for their error.

(28) Now since they did not see fit to retain their knowledge of God, He gave them up to a corrupt way of thinking and to immoral living. (29) Their lives have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, and vice.ⁱ They are rife with jealousy, murder, quarreling, deceit, and spite. They are gossips, (30) slanderers, God-haters, rude, arrogant, and boastful. They invent ways of doing wrong, and they disobey their parents. (31) They are foolish, and they break their promises. They are heartless and without pity. (32) And even though they are aware of God's righteous decree that those who behave like this deserve to die, they not only continue to do these things, but also give their hearty approval to others who practice them.

^a Some manuscripts read *Jesus Christ*. ^b Literally, *a Seed* ^c Literally, *the Spirit of holiness, or the spirit of holiness*. ^d A few manuscripts omit *in Rome*, probably to indicate that Paul's epistle has a message for all people. These same manuscripts also omit *in Rome* in verse 15. ^e Literally, *that is from faith to faith*. ^f Or "*The person who is righteous will live by faith*." See Hab. 2:4. ^g The Greek term that has been translated *human beings* in verses 18 and 23 is gender inclusive. ^h This is the ultimate Lie that denies God and Jesus Christ. ⁱ Some manuscripts read *wickedness, sexual immorality, evil, greed, and vice*.

CHAPTER 2

God's Righteous Judgment

(1) Yet regardless of who you are, you are without excuse if you judge someone else. For you are condemning yourself when you judge another person, because you are doing the very same things as the person you judge. (2) Now we know that God's verdict on the people who practice such evil is based on truth. (3) But when you judge those who behave like this while you are doing the same things, do you think you will escape God's condemnation? (4) Or are you showing contempt for the wealth of His kindness, tolerance, and patience, without realizing that God's kindness should lead you to repentance?

(5) With your hard and unrepentant heart, you are storing up anger for yourself on the day of holy anger, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. (6) Then God will repay each person for what he has done. (7) There will be eternal life for those who are seeking glory, honor, and immortality by patiently doing good, (8) but anger and fury for those who in their selfishness reject the truth and practice wickedness. (9) There will be distress and anguish for every person^a who continues to do wrong—for the Jew first, and also for the Greek. (10) But for everyone who continues to do good, there will be glory, honor, and peace—for the Jew first, and also for the Greek, (11) because God does not show favoritism.

(12) Those who have sinned without knowing the law will also perish without the law, and those who have sinned with a knowledge of the law will be judged by the law.^b (13) For those who merely hear the law are not righteous in God's sight, but those who obey the law will be declared righteous^c—

(14) So whenever Gentiles, who don't have the law, instinctively do what the law requires, they are actually a law for themselves, even though they don't have the law. (15) For their conduct shows that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, and their consciences confirm this fact, since their thoughts either accuse them or defend them^d—(16) on the day when, according to my good news, God will judge human secrets through Christ Jesus.^e

The Jews and the Law

(17) Now suppose you bear the name "Jew," and you rely on the law and boast about your relationship with God. (18) Suppose you know His will and discern what really matters because you receive instruction from the law. (19) Suppose you are confident that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those in darkness, (20) a corrector of the foolish, and a teacher of the young, because in the law, you have the full outline of knowledge and truth. (21) While you are teaching others, are you failing to teach yourself? You keep preaching not to steal, but are you stealing?

(22) You keep telling people not to commit adultery, but are you committing adultery? You are disgusted with idols, but are you robbing temples?^f (23) Although you are constantly boasting about the law, you are dishonoring God by breaking the law. (24) As it is written: “God’s name is being blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”^g

(25) Now circumcision has benefits, provided you continue to obey the law. But if you are a lawbreaker, your circumcision has been changed into uncircumcision.

(26) And if an uncircumcised person follows the law’s requirements, won’t God regard him as circumcised? (27) That person may be uncircumcised in a physical sense, but if he is keeping the law, he will condemn you as a lawbreaker, even though you possess a written code and circumcision.

(28) For a person is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely an outward mark in the flesh. (29) No, a person is a Jew if he is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart. It is spiritual, and it doesn’t depend on a written code. That kind of person receives his praise from God, not from human beings.

^a The Greek term that has been translated *person*, *human*, or *human beings* in verses 9, 16, and 29 is gender inclusive. ^b Most Gentiles had little or no knowledge of God’s written law, while the Jews had received the law as a special revelation. But a mere knowledge of God’s law is worthless unless a person obeys that law. ^c Paul is speaking hypothetically. If a person could obey the law perfectly, God would declare that person righteous in the judgment. But in real life, there are no perfect people. See Rom. 3:23. ^d Verses 14-15 are a parenthetical statement, as verse 16 grammatically follows verse 13. ^e Some manuscripts read *Jesus Christ*. ^f It is uncertain whether Paul intended this question to be taken literally or figuratively. Perhaps he knew of instances when Jews actually pilfered pagan temples. However, “robbing temples” may also be a figure of speech for any blasphemous behavior. ^g Isa. 52:5

CHAPTER 3

The Jewish Advantage

(1) So what advantage is there in being a Jew? Can any value be derived from circumcision? (2) Well in every way, the Jews have a great advantage. In the first place, God entrusted them with His word.^a (3) But what if some of them refused to believe it? Will their unbelief cancel God’s faithfulness? (4) That would be unthinkable! For God must be true, even if everyone else^b is a liar. As it is written:

“You will be vindicated when You speak Your verdicts
and win Your case when You are being judged.”^c

(5) Now if our wickedness displays God’s righteousness more clearly, what can we conclude? Can we conclude that God is unjust when He inflicts His holy anger? (I am using a common human argument.) (6) That would be unthinkable! For if God were unjust, how could He judge the world? (7) And if my falsehood glorified God by enhancing His truthfulness, why would I still be condemned as a sinner? (8) In that case, couldn’t we say, “Let us do evil so that good will come from it?” (Some people are actually slandering us by claiming that we say this, but their condemnation is just.)

All People Are Sinners

(9) So what can we conclude? Are we Jews any better off?^d Not at all! For we have already accused everyone, both Jews and Greeks, of being under the control of sin. (10) As it is written:

“No one is righteous, not even one.
(11) No one has understanding;
no one keeps searching for God.
(12) Everyone has turned away;
they have all become depraved together.
No one keeps doing good, not even one.^e
(13) Their throats are open graves;
their tongues have practiced deceit,^f
the venom of vipers is under their lips.^g
(14) Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness,^h
(15) their feet are quick to shed blood.
(16) Ruin and misery mark their paths,
(17) and they have never known the way to peace,ⁱ
(18) nor have they learned reverence for God.”^j

(19) Now we know that the law’s message applies to those in its jurisdiction—so that every mouth can be hushed and the entire world can be held accountable to God. (20) For no one will be justified^k in God’s sight by doing what the law requires. Rather, through the law, we become fully aware of sin.

Justification by Faith

(21) But now a righteousness from God has been revealed—a righteousness apart from law, although the law and the prophets testify about it. (22) God’s righteousness comes through faith in Jesus Christ and is available to all believers. No distinction is made between people. (23) For all of them sinned,^l and they continue to fall short of God’s glory. (24) But now they are being justified by His free grace, through the redemption that was provided by Christ Jesus. (25) God publicly displayed Him as a Sacrifice, which deflected holy anger from those who have faith in His blood.^m God did this to prove that He is just—for in His patience, He had left the sins committed in earlier times unpunished. (26) But at

the present time, God wants to demonstrate His justice. He wants to prove that He really can be just and still justify the person who has faith in Jesus.

(27) So what has happened to human boasting? There is no more room for it! And why are we saying this? Is it because we have failed to do what the law requires? No, boasting is ruled out on the basis of faith.ⁿ (28) For^o we maintain that a person is justified by faith alone,^p and not by doing what the law requires.

(29) Or do you suppose that God is only the God of the Jews? Isn't He also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of course He is! (30) For there is only one God, and He will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. (31) Does this mean that we are using faith to abolish the law? That would be unthinkable! On the contrary, we are establishing the law!

^a Although Paul's language suggests that he was about to list several blessings which the Jews enjoyed, he only mentions one of them in verse 2. It seems that his mind temporarily moved on to other ideas, until he returned to this theme in Rom. 9:4-5. ^b The Greek term that has been translated *everyone else, human, or person* in verses 4, 5, and 28 is gender inclusive. ^c Ps. 51:4 (Septuagint) ^d Or *Are we Jews at a disadvantage?* The meaning of the Greek is uncertain. ^e See Ps. 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Eccl. 7:20. ^f Ps. 5:9 (Septuagint) ^g Ps. 140:3 (Septuagint) ^h Ps. 10:7 ⁱ Isa. 59:7-8 ^j Ps. 36:1 ^k In the Pauline epistles, the term *justify* always means *to declare righteous*. When God justifies those who have faith in Christ, He is acting as their Judge and giving them an innocent verdict. Although they are sinners, Christ's righteousness stands in place of their unrighteousness, and God regards them as if they are perfect. But when unbelievers try to obtain God's justification by doing what the law requires, they utterly fail and are condemned by their Judge, because they never keep His law perfectly. ^l The tense of the Greek verb that has been translated *sinned* probably indicates that everyone sinned at a particular point in time. In other words, Adam was the representative of the entire human race, and when he sinned, everyone was counted as sinning in Him. ^m Or *Through His blood, God has publicly displayed Him as the appointed Means of deflecting holy anger from those who have faith*. ⁿ If we could be justified by keeping the law, we would have something to boast about. But the good news consigns all of us to the same level. We are all sinners, and we can only be justified by Christ's free grace. When we realize this, we have no basis for boasting about how good we are. ^o Some manuscripts read *Therefore*. ^p Although the word *alone* does not appear in the original text, it is implied.

CHAPTER 4

How Were Abraham and David Justified?

(1) So what can we say about our human ancestor Abraham? Did he discover anything about this issue?^a (2) Well as a matter of fact, if Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not in God’s sight! (3) For what does the scripture say?—“Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”^b

(4) Now if a person is doing work, his wages are considered an obligation rather than a gift. (5) But if a person who doesn’t work keeps believing in the One Who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. (6) David says the same thing when he describes the blessed^c state of the person^d whom God credits with righteousness apart from works:

(7) “How blessed are those
whose lawless deeds are forgiven
and whose sins are covered!

(8) How blessed is the man
who is never charged with sin
by the Lord.”^e

(9) Does this blessing only apply to the circumcised, or does it also apply to the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham’s faith was credited to him as righteousness. (10) But what was Abraham’s situation when it was credited to him? Was he circumcised or uncircumcised? Well as yet, he had not been circumcised, so he was clearly uncircumcised. (11) And he later received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.

Now this means that Abraham was the ancestor^f of every uncircumcised believer who is credited with righteousness. (12) And he was also the ancestor of the circumcised, provided they are not merely circumcised, but are following the path of faith that he walked while he was still uncircumcised.

God’s Promise Comes by Faith

(13) For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants^g through law, but through a righteousness that is based on faith. (14) So if those who rely on law are the ones who will inherit the world, faith has been emptied of its meaning, and the promise has been set aside. (15) For the law always brings God’s holy anger, and where there is no law, there can be no lawbreaking.

(16) This is why God’s promise must come by faith, so that through His grace,

it can be guaranteed to all of Abraham’s descendants—not only to those who received the law, but also to those who share Abraham’s faith.^h For he was the ancestor of all of us. (17) As it is written: “I have made you the father of many nations.”ⁱ

Now Abraham believed the promise when he was standing in God’s presence—the God Who gives life to the dead and Who calls things into being that did not even exist. (18) Although hope seemed lost, Abraham believed that he would become the father of many nations because of what he had been told: [“Count the stars—if you can really count them.] So will your descendants be.”^j (19) His faith did not grow weak when he thought about his own body (which was as good as dead since he was about 100 years old) or about Sarah’s inability to have children. (20) No, unbelief did not cause him to doubt God’s promise. Instead, he became strong in faith, and he gave praise to God. (21) For he was fully convinced that God had the ability to do what He had promised. (22) So this is why Abraham’s faith was credited to him as righteousness.

(23) But the words “it was credited to him” were not written for Abraham alone. (24) They were written for us as well, since righteousness will also be credited to us because we believe in the One Who raised our Lord Jesus from the dead. (25) He was handed over to death because of our transgressions and was raised to life because of our justification.^k

^a Some manuscripts omit *Did he discover anything about this issue?*. ^b Gen. 15:6

^c Or happy—see also verses 7-8. Note that the Greek term that has been translated *blessing* in verse 9 can also be rendered as *happiness*. ^d The Greek term that has been translated *person* in verse 6 is gender inclusive. ^e Ps. 32:1-2 (Septuagint) ^f Or *father*—see also verses 12 and 16. ^g Literally, *seed*—see also verses 16 and 18. ^h Paul is referring to Jews and Gentiles. Both of these groups receive God’s promise in the same way—through faith in Christ. ⁱ Gen. 17:5 (Septuagint) ^j Gen. 15:5 (Septuagint)—although the words in brackets are not part of the original text, they have been added from Gen. 15:5 for clarification. ^k This seems to be an allusion to Isa. 53:4-5, 11-12. The Lord Jesus died as our Substitute because we have transgressed God’s holy law. In the sight of God, the death of Jesus justified the entire human race—even though many people reject their justification through unbelief. On the first Easter, God raised Jesus from the dead because His sacrifice had procured this great blessing for us. Thus God placed His seal of approval on Jesus’ atoning work.

CHAPTER 5

The Results of Justification

(1) Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have^a peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (2) For it is through faith in^b Christ that we have gained entrance into this realm of grace, in which we have taken our stand. And we boast about our hope of sharing God's glory! (3) But beyond that, we even boast about our hardships, because we are aware that hardship produces endurance, (4) endurance produces strength of character, and strength of character produces hope. (5) And this hope never disappoints us, because the Holy Spirit, Who has been given to us, has poured God's love into our hearts.

(6) While we were still helpless, Christ died for us wicked people at just the right time. (7) It is very unusual to find someone who is willing to die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person, someone might even dare to die. (8) But Christ died for us while we were still sinners, and this proves that God loves us.

(9) Now since we have been justified by Christ's blood, we are even more certain that He will save us from God's holy anger. (10) For if, when we were His enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, now that we have been reconciled, we are even more certain that we will be saved by His life. (11) Furthermore, we also keep boasting about God through our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has provided us with reconciliation.

Adam and Christ

(12) So then, sin entered the world through one man—and death came through sin,^c and in this way, death spread to all people^d—in whom everyone sinned. (13) For sin was already in the world before the law was given. But even though no one is charged with sin in the absence of law, (14) death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses. It even reigned over those who had not sinned by breaking a direct command like Adam did.

Now Adam typified the Coming One,^e (15) but God's free gift is not like Adam's transgression. For if many people died because of the transgression of that one man, it is even more certain that God's grace and the gracious gift of the One Man, Jesus Christ, have overflowed to many people.

(16) Again, God's gift cannot be compared with the effect of that one man's sin. For the verdict that followed his one sin brought condemnation, but God's free gift that followed many human transgressions brought justification. (17) So if death established its reign through the transgression of that one man, it is even more certain that those who receive God's abundant grace and His gift of

righteousness will live and reign through the One Man, Jesus Christ.

(18) Therefore, just as one transgression brought condemnation for all people, in the same way, one act of righteousness brought justification that results in life for all people.^f (19) For just as many people became sinners through the disobedience of that one man, in the same way, through the obedience of the One Man, many people will become righteous.

(20) Now law crept in to increase transgression.^g But when sin grew powerful, grace overflowed even more. (21) For just as sin established its reign by bringing death, in the same way, grace established its reign by bringing a righteousness that leads to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

^a Some manuscripts read *let us have*. ^b Some manuscripts omit *faith in*. ^c See Gen. 3. ^d The Greek term that has been translated *people* in verses 12 and 18 is gender inclusive. ^e *The Coming One* is a Messianic title that refers to Jesus. ^f When Adam sinned, the entire human race was condemned, and when Jesus performed His righteous act by dying for human sin, the entire human race was justified. But this universal justification only becomes effective when people receive it by faith. ^g Paul seems to be saying that the restrictions of the law provoke sinful human nature to even greater rebellion.

CHAPTER 6

The Basis for Holy Living

(1) So what should we conclude? Should we continue to practice sin so that grace can abound? (2) That would be unthinkable! We died to sin, so how can we live in it any longer? (3) Or don't you realize that all of us who were baptized into union with Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? (4) And when we were baptized into His death, we were buried with Him, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the Father's glorious power, we too can live a new life.^a

(5) If we have become one with Christ in a death like His, we will also be one with Him in a resurrection like His. (6) For we know that our old humanity^b was crucified with Christ, so that the instrument of sin would be rendered powerless, and we would no longer be slaves to sin. (7) For anyone who has died has been declared innocent of sin.^c

(8) Now since we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him. (9) For we know that Christ was raised from the dead and can never die again. In fact, death no longer has any mastery over Him, (10) because when He died, He died once and for all as far as sin was concerned. But now that He is alive, He is living for God. (11) And in the same way, you must regard yourselves as dead to

sin, but alive for God in your union with Christ Jesus.^d

(12) Therefore, don't let the reign of sin continue in your mortal bodies, so that you follow its desires. (13) Stop making your body parts available to sin, as implements for doing wrong. Instead, make yourselves available to God, as people who have passed from death to life, and let God use your body parts as tools for doing what is right. (14) For sin will not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.^e

Slaves to Righteousness

(15) Now what does this mean? Should we sin because we are not under law, but under grace? That would be unthinkable! (16) Don't you realize that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you become the slaves of the master you are obeying? You are either slaves to sin, which leads to death, or slaves to obedience, which leads to righteousness. (17) But thanks be to God that even though you used to be slaves to sin, you heartily obeyed the summary of Christian teaching to which you were entrusted. (18) And since you have been set free from sin, you have become slaves to righteousness.

(19) I am using common human language because your sinful nature makes you weak. Yes, just as you once offered your bodies as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing lawlessness, so now you must offer them as slaves to righteousness, which leads to sanctification.^f (20) For when you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. (21) And what benefit did you gain from doing things that bring you shame at the present time? It is clear that those things end in death! (22) But now that you have been set free from sin and have become God's slaves, the benefit you have gained leads to sanctification and, in the end, to eternal life. (23) For the wages of sin equal death, but God's free gift is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

^a For Paul, baptism signified union with Christ. Through this union, Christ became our Representative, and everything that happened to Christ was counted as happening to us. So when Christ died on the cross, we were counted as dying in Him, and when Christ rose from the dead, we were counted as rising to eternal life in Him. ^b The Greek term that has been translated *humanity* is gender inclusive. ^c According to Rom. 6:23, the penalty for sin is death. But God has already counted us as dying in Christ. This means that the penalty for our sin was paid when Christ died on the cross. Consequently, God can lawfully give us an innocent verdict, even though we are sinners. ^d Paul is telling us that since we died and rose in our Representative, we should live like we believe this. In other words, we should put away the sinful actions that were part of our old lives and begin living for God. ^e The expressions *under law* and *under grace* are very important in Pauline thought. To be *under law* means to be under the law as a method of salvation. But this method of salvation doesn't work, since it only brings condemnation to guilty sinners who have broken the law. On the other hand, those who are under grace as a method of salvation receive an innocent verdict from God. What is more, with Christ as their new Master, the power of sin is broken in their lives. ^f *Sanctification* is another important Pauline term. In Paul's epistles, *sanctification*

denotes a state of consecration. This means that a sanctified person has been set aside for a holy purpose. It is also true that a sanctified person is growing in Christ, and for that reason, the term has commonly been identified with growth in holiness. However, it seems that Paul was thinking more of a state than a process when he spoke of sanctification.

CHAPTER 7

An Illustration from Marriage

(1) Don't you realize, brothers—for I am speaking to people who know the law—that the law only has authority over a person^a during his lifetime? (2) For example, a married woman is legally bound to her husband as long as he is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from the marriage law. (3) So if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she will be called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is legally free, and in that case, she is not an adulteress if she marries another man.

(4) Now in the same way, my brothers, as far as the law is concerned, you were put to death when Christ's body was crucified,^b and you belong to another Person—to the One Who was raised from the dead, so we could bear fruit for God. (5) For when we were controlled by our sinful nature, the sinful desires aroused by the law were active in our bodies and bore fruit for death. (6) But now that we are dead to what held us captive, we have been released from the law, so that we can serve God in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

Law and Sin

(7) So what should we conclude? Is the law sinful? That would be unthinkable! In fact, I would not have recognized sin if it had not been for the law. For example, I would not have known what it means to covet if the law had not said, "You must not covet."^c (8) But sin^d found its opportunity in that commandment^e and produced all kinds of covetous desires in me. For without law, sin is dead!

(9) Now there was a time when I was alive without any connection to law. But when that commandment came along, sin sprang to life, (10) and I died. I found that the commandment which was meant to bring me life actually brought me death. (11) For sin found its opportunity to deceive me through that commandment, and it used the commandment to kill me.

(12) So then, the law is holy, and that commandment is holy, righteous, and good. (13) But did something good bring about my death? That would be unthinkable! No, it was sin that used something good to kill me, and in doing so, it showed its

true colors. For through that commandment, sin became more sinful than ever.

Paul's Struggle with Sin

(14) We know that the law is spiritual, but I am unspiritual—sold as a slave to sin. (15) I don't understand my own actions. For I don't do what I want to do. Instead, I keep doing what I hate. (16) Now if I keep doing what I don't want to do, I agree that the law is good. (17) But this means that I am not really the one who is doing it. No, the sin that lives in me is doing it.

(18) I know that nothing good lives in me—I mean in my sinful nature. Although I have the desire to do what is good, I can't put it into practice. (19) For I don't do the good I want to do. Instead, I keep doing the evil I don't want to do. (20) Now if I keep doing what I don't want to do, I am not really the one who is doing it, but the sin that lives in me is doing it.

(21) So I find this principle at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there beside me. (22) For in my inner self, I delight in God's law. (23) But I keep noticing another principle at work within me—a principle that is waging war against the law in my mind and making me a prisoner of the rule of sin within me. (24) What a wretch I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is doomed to death? (25) Thanks be to God! He rescues me through our Lord Jesus Christ! So in my mind, I keep serving God's law, but in my sinful nature, I keep serving the rule of sin.

^aThe Greek term that has been translated *person* is gender inclusive. ^b Literally, *you were put to death to the law through the body of Christ*. Paul is telling us that Christ was our Representative, and that when He died, we were counted as dying in Him. ^c Ex. 20:17; Deut. 5:21 ^d In Rom. 7, sin is more than a wrong act. It is also a wrong condition that exists in human nature and that leads to wrong acts. Theologians have termed this wrong condition *original sin* and wrong acts *actual sin*. ^e Paul seems to be referring to the tenth commandment, which forbids coveting. He realized that sinful human beings can never really keep that commandment, as it forbids all selfishness.

CHAPTER 8

Controlled by the Spirit

(1) So now there is no condemnation for those who are in union with Christ Jesus,^a (2) because the rule of the Spirit that leads to life in Christ Jesus has set you^b free from the rule of sin and death. (3) For God did what the law was powerless to do, since it was weakened by our sinful nature. He sent His own Son with a nature that was like our sinful nature, to deal with sin^c and condemn it in His flesh. (4) And this means that the righteous requirements of the law can be fulfilled in us, who walk in fellowship with the Spirit and not with the sinful nature.

(5) Those who live for the sinful nature keep focusing their minds on what that nature desires. But those who live for the Spirit keep focusing their minds on what the Spirit desires. (6) Now when the mind is focused on the sinful nature, the result is death, but when the mind is focused on the Spirit, the result is life and peace. (7) For the sinful mind is hostile to God. It refuses to submit to God's law; in fact, it cannot submit to the law. (8) So those who are controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

(9) But you are not controlled by the sinful nature. For you are under the Spirit's control, since God's Spirit lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

(10) Now if Christ is in you, even though your bodies are dead because of sin, the Spirit brings you life because of your justification.^d (11) And if the Spirit of the One Who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, the One Who raised Christ from the dead will provide your mortal bodies with life through His indwelling Spirit.

(12) So then, brothers, we don't owe the sinful nature anything that obligates us to live the way it wants us to live. (13) However, if you do live for the sinful nature, you are going to die. But if, by the Spirit, you put to death the sinful practices of the body, you will live. (14) For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.

(15) You did not receive a spirit of slavery that leads you into fear again. No, you received the Spirit of adoption—the Spirit Who urges us to cry, “Abba!^e Father!” (16) For the Spirit Himself affirms our inward conviction^f that we are God's children. (17) And if we are His children, we are also His heirs. Yes, we are heirs of God and coheirs with Christ!^g But we must share in His sufferings if we also want to share in His glory.

Our Glorious Destiny

(18) I do not consider our present sufferings worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us, (19) since the created order is waiting eagerly for God to reveal His children. (20) For creation was subjected to a meaningless existence, but not by its own choice. No, the One Who brought it into subjection did so with the hope (21) that creation itself would also be freed from its slavery to decay and enter into the glorious freedom of the children of God. (22) For as we know, the entire created order has been groaning with the pains of childbirth up to the present time.

(23) What is more, we who have a foretaste^h of the Spirit are also groaning inwardly as we eagerly await our adoption as God's children—which will mean the redemption of our bodies. (24) Now we were saved with this hope in mind. But hope that is visible is not really hope. For why would anyone hope for something he can already see? (25) But if we hope for what we don't see, we are willing to wait for it with patience and eager anticipation.

God Desires Our Good

(26) In the same way, the Spirit also helps us in our weakness. For even though we don't know what to pray for, the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. (27) But the One Who examines our hearts knows what the Spirit means, because the Spirit intercedes for His holy people in accordance with the divine will. (28) And we know that the Spirit works in cooperation with all things, to bring good to those who love Godⁱ and are called according to His plan.

(29) For God chose His people before they existed, and He predestined them to share the likeness of His Son, so that the Son could be the Firstborn^l among many brothers. (30) Now God also called the ones He predestined, and He justified the ones He called, and He glorified the ones He justified.

(31) So what can we conclude? If God is for us, who can be against us? (32) He did not spare His own Son! Instead, He gave Him up for all of us! So how could He fail to lavish everything else on us along with His Son?

(33) Who will bring any charge against God's chosen ones? God is the One Who justifies them! (34) Who is condemning them? It was Christ Jesus^k Who died for all of us. But more than that, He was raised to life, and now He is at the right hand of God, and He even intercedes for us!

(35) What can separate us from the love of Christ?^l Can tribulation, distress, or persecution? Can famine, nakedness, danger, or sword? (36) As it is written:

“For Your sake, we are facing death all day long.
We are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”^m

(37) And yet in spite of all these things, we are winning an overwhelming victory

through the One Who loved us! (38) For I have become convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor rulers, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,ⁿ (39) neither height nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

^aSome manuscripts add *who do not walk in fellowship with the sinful nature, but with the Spirit.* ^bSome manuscripts read *me.* ^cOr *to be an offering for sin* ^dOr *your spirit is alive because of your justification.* ^e*Abba* is an extremely intimate Aramaic term for a father. *Dad* is probably the closest English equivalent. ^fLiterally, *testifies to our spirit* ^gPaul is telling us that God Himself is our eternal Inheritance. ^hLiterally, *the firstfruits* ⁱSome manuscripts read *God works in cooperation with all things, to bring good to those who love Him.* ^jPaul refers to Christ as the *Firstborn* to stress His preeminence. However, the term *Firstborn* does not imply that Christ had a beginning. ^kSome manuscripts omit *Jesus.* ^lSome manuscripts read *the love of God?* Other manuscripts read *the love of God which is in Christ Jesus?* ^mPs. 44:22 ⁿSome manuscripts read *neither angels, rulers, nor powers, neither the present nor the future.*

CHAPTER 9

Paul's Grief for His People

(1) I am speaking the truth in my union with Christ. I am not lying. My conscience, which is guided by the Holy Spirit, affirms me in this conviction. (2) I have deep grief and endless heartache. (3) For I could even wish that I were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers and fellow countrymen.

(4) They are the people of Israel who were adopted by God, and the divine glory, the covenants,^a the law, the sanctuary service, and the promises of God all belong to them. (5) The patriarchs belong to them as well, and their line of descent leads directly to the Christ,^b Who is God over all and praised forever!^c Amen.

How God Chooses Jews and Gentiles

(6) It is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all the Israelis really belong to Israel, (7) nor are all of Abraham's descendants^d actually his children. No, in the words of scripture "It is through Isaac that descendants will be named for you."^e (8) In other words, Abraham's natural children are not necessarily the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as Abraham's true descendants. (9) For this is how the promise was stated: "I will return at the appointed time, and Sarah will have a son."^f

(10) Nor is that all. Something similar happened to Rebekah when she became pregnant by her one husband who was our ancestor^g Isaac. (11) Now the twins

had not been born yet, and they had not done anything that was good or evil. But in order to be certain that His plan of election would remain in force, (12) and that it would be based on His call and not on works, God told Rebekah, “The older will serve the younger.”^h (13) As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”ⁱ

(14) So what can we conclude? Is God unjust? That would be unthinkable! (15) For He says to Moses, “I will have mercy on anyone I wish, and I will have compassion on anyone I wish.”^j (16) Therefore, God’s choice does not depend on anyone’s will or effort,^k but on the mercy of God Himself. (17) After all, Pharaoh is told in scripture, “I raised you up for this very purpose—to demonstrate My power through you and to proclaim My name in all the earth.”^l (18) So God has mercy on anyone He wishes, and He hardens anyone He wishes.

(19) Now one of you may ask me, “Why does God still blame us? For who can resist His will?” (20) But who are you, mere human being,^m to talk back to God? Does a molded object ask its molder, “Why did you make me like this?” (21) Doesn’t a potter have the right to make two objects out of the same lump of clay, one for a special purpose and the other for common use?

(22) Although God is willing to display His holy anger and reveal His power, could it be that He has actually shown great patience and endured the objects of His anger who have doomed themselves to destruction?ⁿ (23) What if He has done this to reveal the wealth of His glory to the objects of His mercy, whom He prepared in advance for glory? (24) And we are the objects of His mercy whom He called, not only from the Jews, but also from the Gentiles.

(25) For this is what God says in Hosea:

“Those who were not My people, I will call My people,
and the person who was unloved, I will call My loved one.”^o

(26) and,

“Wherever they were told, ‘You are not My people,’
they will be called children of the living God.”^p

(27) But in regard to Israel, Isaiah cries out:

“Even if the Israelis are as numerous
as the grains of sand on the seashore,
only a remnant will be saved.

(28) For the Lord will carry out
His sentence on the land
with quickness and closure.”^q

(29) And this is what Isaiah said in a previous place:

“If the Lord of the heavenly armies
had not left us some descendants,
we would have become like Sodom,
and people would have compared us
to Gomorrah.”^r

Israel's Unbelief

(30) So what can we conclude? The Gentiles, who were not pursuing righteousness, have gained a righteousness that comes by faith. (31) But the Israelis pursued a legal righteousness and failed to reach their goal. (32) And why did they fail? They failed because they did not pursue righteousness by faith. Instead, they pursued righteousness as if it were based on works. In other words, they stumbled over the Stumbling Stone. (33) As it is written:

“See, I am putting a Stone in Zion
that will make people stumble,
and a great Rock that will make them fall.
But the person who believes in Him
will never be disappointed.”^s

^a Some manuscripts read *covenant*. ^b Literally, *and from whom the Christ came, according to the flesh*,—in this instance, Paul is using *Christ* strictly as a title. The Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. ^c Or . . . *Christ, Who is over all. God be praised forever!* Or . . . *Christ. God Who is over all be praised forever!* ^d Literally, *seed*—this word appears a second time in verse 7. It also appears in verses 8 and 29. ^e Gen. 21:12 (Septuagint) ^f Gen. 18:10, 14 ^g Or *father* ^h Gen. 25:23 (Septuagint) ⁱ Mal. 1:2-3 ^j Ex. 33:19 (Septuagint) ^k Literally, *on anyone's will or running*, ^l Ex. 9:16 ^m The Greek term that has been translated *human being* is gender inclusive. ⁿ Or *who have been doomed to destruction?* The voice of the Greek verb can be understood as a reflexive middle or as a passive. ^o Hos. 2:23 ^p Hos. 1:10 (Septuagint) ^q Isa. 10:22-23—the translation *with quickness and closure* is an attempt to capture the word play in the Greek participles. Literally, *For the Lord will carry out His sentence on the land, concluding it and cutting it short.* ^r Some manuscripts read *The Lord will conclude His sentence and cut it short in righteousness, for He will carry out His sentence on the land and make it brief.* ^s Isa. 1:9 (Septuagint) ^t Isa. 8:14; 28:16

CHAPTER 10

Jewish People Need Jesus

(1) Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Jewish people is that they can be saved. (2) For I can testify to their zeal for God, but it is not based on accurate knowledge. (3) For since they keep ignoring the righteousness that comes from God while they try to establish their own, it is clear that they have not submitted to God's righteousness. (4) After all, Christ put an end to law as a source of righteousness for every believer.

The Simplicity of Righteousness by Faith

(5) Here is what Moses writes about the righteousness that comes by law: "The person^a who does these things will find life in them."^b (6) But the good news about righteousness by faith says something like this: "Do not ask yourself, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'"^c (which implies that we have to bring Christ down), (7) "or 'Who will descend into the abyss?'"^d (which implies that we have to bring Christ back from the dead). (8) On the contrary, what does the good news assert?

"The message is near you. It is on your lips and in your heart."^e

Now this is the message about faith that we are proclaiming. (9) So if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (10) For believing with your heart leads to justification, and confessing with your lips leads to salvation. (11) As the scripture says, "The person who believes in Him will never be disappointed."^f

Salvation for Everyone

(12) So there is no distinction between Jews and Greeks, because they all have the same Lord, Who richly blesses all who call on Him. (13) For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."^g

(14) But how can people call on Someone they have not believed in? And how can they believe in Someone they have never heard of? And how can they hear about Him without a preacher? (15) And how can anyone preach without being sent? As it is written,

"How timely are the footsteps of those who proclaim good news!"^h

(16) However, some people have refused to heed the good news. For Isaiah asks, "Lord, who has believed what we have heard?"ⁱ (17) So faith comes from hearing, and hearing comes when the word of Christ^j is preached.

(18) But I ask, “Didn’t they hear the message?” Of course they did! In fact,

“Their voice has sounded out to all the earth,
and their words to the ends of the world.”^k

(19) Again I ask, “Did Israel fail to understand the message?” Well first of all, consider what Moses says:

“I will use those who are not a nation to make you envious,
and with an ignorant nation, I will provoke your anger.”^l

(20) But Isaiah’s comments are even bolder:

“I was found by those who were not looking for Me,
and I revealed Myself to those who never inquired about Me.”^m

(21) Yet concerning Israel, he says:

“All day long, I have held out My hands
to a disobedient and rebellious people.”ⁿ

^a The Greek term that has been translated *person* is gender inclusive. ^b Lev. 18:5 ^c Deut. 30:12 ^d Paul seems to be alluding to Deut. 30:13 and Ps. 107:26. ^e Deut. 30:14 ^f Isa. 28:16 ^g Joel 2:32 (Septuagint) ^h Isa. 52:7; Nah. 1:15 ⁱ Isa. 53:1 (Septuagint) ^j Some manuscripts read *of God*. ^k Ps. 19:4 (Septuagint) ^l Deut. 32:21 ^m Isa. 65:1 ⁿ Isa. 65:2

CHAPTER 11

The Remnant of Israel

(1) So I ask, has God rejected His people? That would be unthinkable! I am an Israeli myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin.^a (2) God has not rejected the people He acknowledged long ago as His own. Don’t you remember what the scripture says in the story about Elijah—how he brought an accusation to God against Israel: (3) “Lord, they have killed Your prophets; they have torn down Your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to take my life”^b

(4) But what was God’s answer to him? “I have left Myself seven thousand men who have refused to kneel and worship Baal.”^c (5) Now in the same way, there is also a remnant at the present time that has been chosen by grace. (6) However, if God’s choice is based on grace, then it does not depend on works, or grace would

no longer be grace.

(7) So what does this mean? It means that Israel failed to gain the very thing it continues to seek so earnestly. Yes, the chosen few have gained it, but the rest of them were hardened. (8) As it is written:

“God has dulled their minds.
He has given them blind eyes and deaf ears.
And they are still like that today.”^d

(9) And David says:

“May their own table become a trap and a net,
a stumbling block and a punishment for them!^e
(10) May their eyes become darkened and blind,
and their backs be constantly bent!”^f

God's Way of Saving Israel

(11) So I ask, was their fall beyond recovery when they stumbled? That would be unthinkable! And yet because of their transgression, salvation came to the Gentiles to make the Jews envious. (12) Now if their transgression made the world rich and their loss made the Gentiles rich, think how much more their full restoration would mean!

(13) I am speaking to you Gentiles. As an apostle to the Gentiles, I am heaping glory on my ministry, (14) in the hope that I can make my own people envious and save some of them. (15) For if their rejection brought about the reconciliation of the world, what would their acceptance mean but life from the dead!

(16) If the first handful of dough is holy, so is the whole batch. And if the root is holy, so are the branches. (17) But if some of the branches have been broken off, and you, a wild olive branch, have been grafted in among them to share the rich sap that flows from the root of the olive tree, (18) do not boast about being better than the original branches. If you do, remember that you don't support the root; the root supports you!

(19) “But branches were broken off so I could be grafted in,” you will say. (20) True enough! They were broken off because of their unbelief, and it is only because of your faith that you remain. So instead of being proud, you should be afraid. (21) For if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you either.

(22) Consider how kind and severe God is. On the one hand, He shows severity to those who have fallen, but on the other hand, He lavishes kindness on you, provided you remain in His kindness. For you can also be cut off. (23) And if the Jews do not persist in their unbelief, they will be grafted in again, because God

has the power to graft them in. (24) After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that was wild by nature and were unnaturally grafted into a domestic olive tree, how much easier it will be to graft those natural branches back into their own olive tree!

(25) Brothers, in case you think you are wiser than you really are, I want you to understand this mystery.^g Israel has experienced a partial hardening until the full number of Gentiles comes to God. (26) And in this way, all Israel will be saved. As it is written:

“The Deliverer will come from Zion;

He will turn wickedness away from Jacob.

(27) For this will be My covenant with them
when I take away their sins.”^h

(28) As far as the good news is concerned, the Jews are God’s enemies for your sake. But as far as their election is concerned, they are dear to Him because of who their ancestorsⁱ were. (29) For God never changes His mind when He gives anything or calls anyone. (30) Although you disobeyed God in the past, you now enjoy His mercy because of their disobedience. (31) And in the same way, they have also disobeyed at the present time, so they can’t enjoy mercy because of the mercy shown to you. (32) For God has locked all people in the dungeon of their own disobedience, so He can have mercy on them all.

(33) O the depth of God’s wealth, wisdom, and knowledge!

How impossible it is to fathom His decisions or trace His ways!

(34) “Who has understood the mind of the Lord,
or who has become His counselor?”^k

(35) “Who has advanced a gift to God,
and earned His favor in return?”^l

(36) He is the Source, Sustainer, and Goal of everything!
Praise be to Him forever! Amen.

^a Literally, *from the seed of Abraham and the tribe of Benjamin*. ^b 1 Kings 19:10, 14 ^c 1 Kings 19:18 ^d Deut. 29:4; Isa. 29:10 ^e If thugs or enemy soldiers burst in on a feast, a long tablecloth could easily entangle those who were trying to flee. ^f Ps. 69:22-23 ^g The Greek term that has been translated *mystery* refers to a special truth which God has revealed to Christians. ^h Isa. 59:20-21; Jer. 31:33-34 ⁱ Or *fathers* ^j Some manuscripts read *can now*. ^k Isa. 40:13 ^l This may be an allusion to Job 35:7 or 41:3.

CHAPTER 12

Living Sacrifices

(1) Therefore, brothers, in view of God's mercy, I implore you to offer your bodies as living sacrifices^a that are holy and pleasing to God. For this will make your worship intelligent and spiritual.^b (2) Do not let yourselves be molded by this present age. But allow yourselves to be transformed by the renewal of your minds. Then you will be able to discern God's will, and to know what is good, acceptable, and complete.

(3) In consideration of the grace God has given me, I am asking all of you not to think too highly of yourselves. Instead, you should employ your minds in forming a reasonable estimate of yourselves that accords with the measure of faith God has given you.

Spiritual Gifts

(4) Now each of us has one body with many parts, and these parts do not all have the same function. (5) And in the same way, although we are many people, we form one body in our union with Christ, and as parts of that one body, we belong to one another. (6) We also have gifts that differ from one another, according to the grace that has been given to us. So if your gift is prophecy, use it in proportion to your faith. (7) If your gift is service, use it in serving. If it is teaching, use it in teaching. (8) If it is encouraging, use it to give encouragement. If it is sharing, be generous. If it is leadership, lead with enthusiasm. If it is showing mercy, do it cheerfully.

Love in Action

(9) Your love must be sincere. Abhor what is evil, and cling to what is good! (10) Be devoted to one another with brotherly love, and take the lead in showing respect for one another. (11) When zeal is needed, don't be slackers. Be on fire with the Spirit, and serve the Lord! (12) Rejoice in hope; be patient in trouble, and continue in prayer. (13) Contribute to the needs of God's holy people, and practice hospitality.

(14) Bless those who persecute you.^c Always bless them, and never curse them. (15) Rejoice with those who are rejoicing, and cry with those who are crying. (16) Live in harmony with one another. Instead of being arrogant, be willing to associate with lowly people. And don't dwell on how wise you are.

(17) Never pay someone back with evil for the evil he has done you, but be preoccupied with what is right in the sight of all people.^d (18) Do all you possibly

can to live at peace with everyone. (19) Do not take revenge, dear friends. Instead, leave room for God to inflict His holy anger. For it is written, “‘Vengeance is Mine; I will repay,’ says the Lord.”^e

(20) But—

“If your enemy is hungry, feed him.
If he is thirsty, give him something to drink.
In doing this, you will heap fiery coals on his head.”^f

(21) Don’t let evil gain a victory over you, but conquer evil with good.

^a When an animal was sacrificed, it gave all it had, because it gave its life. In the same way, Paul is pleading with Christians to give God everything they have. ^b The Greek adjective that appears here denotes both spirituality and intelligence. ^c Some manuscripts omit *you*. ^d The Greek term that has been translated *people* in verse 17 and *everyone* in verse 18 is gender inclusive. ^e Deut. 32:35 ^f Prov. 25:21-22

CHAPTER 13

Political Rulers Are God’s Servants

(1) Every person must submit to the supreme authority of the government. For no government exists unless God has permitted it, and the governments that currently exist have been established by Him. (2) So anyone who resists the government has taken his stand against a divine institution, and those who do this can blame themselves for the condemnation they will receive.

(3) Rulers do not bring fear to people whose conduct is good, but only to those who do wrong. Would you like to live without being afraid of government officials? Then continue to do good, and you will have their approval. (4) For they are God’s servants who are working for your good. But if you do wrong, you should be afraid, because they have good reason to bear the sword. Yes, they are God’s servants who bring punishment on anyone who keeps doing wrong. (5) Therefore, you have an obligation to submit to them—not only because of possible punishment, but because your conscience requires it. (6) This is also why you should pay taxes. For rulers are God’s public servants, and they constantly devote their energy to governing. (7) So fulfill your obligations to everyone. Be sure to pay your taxes, tolls, respect, and honor.

The Debt of Love

(8) Leave no debt unpaid, except the continuing debt to love one another. For the person who loves another human being has fulfilled the law. (9) The commandments, “You must not commit adultery; you must not murder; you must not steal;^a you must not covet,”^b and any other commandment are summarized in this sentence: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”^c

(10) Love never wrongs a neighbor. So love is the fulfillment of the law.

The Night Is Almost Over

(11) Since you are aware that the time of crisis has arrived, you need to be careful to love your neighbor.^d It is high time for you to awaken out of sleep. For our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. (12) The night is almost over, and the day is approaching.

So we must put aside the works of darkness and put on the weapons of light. (13) Let us behave decently, like people do in the daytime—no wild parties or bouts of drunkenness, no sexual immorality or lewd conduct, and no quarreling or jealousy! (14) But put on the armor of the Lord Jesus Christ, and stop dwelling on the desires of your sinful nature.

^a Some manuscripts insert *you must not give false testimony*. ^b Ex. 20:13-15, 17; Deut. 5:17-19, 21 ^c Lev. 19:18 ^d This is probably what Paul intended to say. Because of the fragmentary nature of the text, the meaning of the Greek is uncertain.

CHAPTER 14

Weak and Strong Christians

(1) Now as for the person whose faith is weak, you must welcome him into your fellowship without quarreling about his personal opinions. (2) One person believes he can eat all kinds of food, while another person, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. (3) The person who eats everything should not look down on the one who does not, and the person who does not eat everything should not condemn the one who does, because God has accepted that person. (4) Who are you to condemn someone else’s servant? His own master will decide whether he stands or falls. And he will stand, because the Lord^a has the ability to make him stand!

(5) One person thinks one day is more important than another, while another

person thinks all days are alike. Each person must follow his own conviction. (6) The person who thinks one day is special has the Lord in mind. And the person who eats everything honors the Lord in his eating, since he gives thanks to God. Likewise, the person who does not eat everything honors the Lord in his abstinence, since he also gives thanks to God.

(7) None of us live for ourselves, and none of us die for ourselves. (8) If we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. (9) For Christ died and returned to life so He could be the Lord of both the living and the dead.

Do Not Judge Others

(10) But as for you, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For all of us will stand before God's^b judgment seat. (11) It is written:

“As surely as I live,” says the Lord,
“Every knee will bow to Me,
and every tongue will confess to God.”^c

(12) So then, each one of us will have to answer for himself to God,^d (13) and this means that we should stop judging one another. Instead, you should determine never to put a stumbling block or trap in your brother's way.

(14) I have been taught and persuaded by the Lord Jesus that no food is unclean in itself. But if someone regards it as unclean, then it is unclean for him. (15) So if the food you eat is hurting your brother, you are no longer acting in love. Do not use your food to destroy a person for whom Christ died. (16) And do not let a practice that is right for you be brought into disrepute. (17) For the kingdom of God is not based on rules about eating and drinking. Instead, it is concerned with righteousness, peace, and joy that are produced by the Holy Spirit.

(18) Now anyone who keeps serving Christ in this matter is pleasing to God and respected by human beings.^e (19) So then, we are pursuing^f the things that make for peace and that lead us to build one another up. (20) Do not tear down God's work because of food. All foods are clean, but it is wrong to make another person stumble in his faith because of what you eat. (21) It is better to avoid eating meat, drinking wine, or doing anything else that will make your brother stumble.^g

(22) So whatever your faith dictates in regard to this matter, keep it between yourself and God. How blessed^h is the person who never brings condemnation on himself because of what he approves. (23) But the person who has doubts about certain foods has already been condemned if he eats them, because his actions do not stem from faith. In fact, every action that does not stem from faith is sin.

^a Some manuscripts read *because God*. ^b Some manuscripts read *Christ's*. ^c Isa. 45:23; 49:18 ^d Some manuscripts omit *to God*. ^e The Greek term that

has been translated *human beings* is gender inclusive. ^f Some manuscripts read *let us pursue*. ^g Some manuscripts add *or trap him or make him weak*.
^h Or *happy*

CHAPTER 15

Counsel for Strong Christians

(1) Those of us who are strong have a continuing obligation to be patient with the failings of the weak, and not to go on pleasing ourselves. (2) Each of us should try to please his neighbor, seeking his good and building him up in the Lord. (3) For even Christ did not please Himself. Instead, the things that happened to Him were a fulfillment of what is written:

“The insults of the people who are insulting You have fallen on Me.”^a

An Appeal for Unity

(4) Everything that was written in the past was written for our instruction, so that through the endurance and encouragement that the scriptures give us, we could have hope. (5) Now may God, the Source of endurance and encouragement, enable you to live in unity with one another as you follow the example of Christ Jesus. (6) Then you will be able to praise the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with full unity of mind and voice.

(7) So accept one another, just as Christ brought glory to God by accepting you.^b

The Universal Savior

(8) For I always say that Christ became a Servant of the Jewish people^c to prove that God is truthful, by fulfilling His promises to the patriarchs, (9) and by giving the Gentiles a reason to praise Him for His mercy. As it is written:

“Therefore, I will acknowledge You among the Gentiles,
and I will sing hymns to Your name.”^d

(10) And again, scripture says,

“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with God’s people!”^e

(11) And again,

“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles;

let all the peoples praise Him!”^f

(12) And again, Isaiah says,

“The Root of Jesse will come;
He will arise to govern the Gentiles,
and they will put their hope in Him.”^g

(13) May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you continue to believe. Then, by the power of the Holy Spirit, you will overflow with hope.

Paul's Reasons for Writing Boldly

(14) My brothers, I am convinced that you are filled with goodness and equipped with all the knowledge you need to counsel one another. (15) Nevertheless,^h I have written rather boldly to you in parts of this letter, both as a reminder to you and in consideration of the grace God has given me. (16) This grace has made me a minister of Christ Jesus among the Gentiles, with the priestly duty of proclaiming God’s good news. And as a result, the Gentiles have become an acceptable offering that the Holy Spirit has consecrated.

(17) So I have grounds to boast in Christ Jesus about my service for God. (18) I will dare to speak only of what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God. Christ has done this through my words and actions, (19) through the power of miraculous signs and wonders, and through the power of the Spirit.ⁱ I have fully proclaimed the good news about Christ from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum.^j (20) It is always my goal to proclaim the good news where the name of Christ has not been heard, since I have no desire to build on someone else’s foundation. (21) As it is written:

“Those who were never told about Him will see,
and those who never heard will understand.”^k

(22) So this explains why my path was blocked on many occasions from coming to visit you.

Paul's Desire to Visit Rome

(23) But now I have no more work in these regions, and for many years, I have been longing to visit you (24) on my way to Spain. So I hope to see you on my way through, and to receive your assistance in getting there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while.

(25) At the present time, however, I am making my way to Jerusalem in the service of God’s holy people. (26) For the churches in Macedonia and Achaia^l wanted to share some of their goods with those who are destitute among the holy people in Jerusalem. (27) These Gentiles were pleased to do this, and they

actually owe it to the Jews. After all, the Jews shared their spiritual blessings with the Gentiles, so when it comes to material blessings, the Gentiles have an obligation to be of service to the Jews.

(28) Now after I complete this mission and certify their contribution, I will set out for Spain and visit you on the way. (29) And I know that when I come to you, I will have the full blessing of Christ.^m

(30) I implore you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit's love, to join me in my struggle by praying to God on my behalf. (31) Pray that I will be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea, that my ministry in Jerusalem will be acceptable to God's holy people, (32) and that by the will of Jesus Christ,ⁿ I can come to you with joy and relax in your company.

(33) May the God of peace be with all of you. Amen.

^a Ps. 69:9 (Septuagint) ^b Some manuscripts read *by accepting us*. ^c Literally, *of the circumcision* ^d Ps. 18:49 ^e Deut. 32:43 (Septuagint) ^f Ps. 117:1 ^g Isa. 11:10 ^h Some manuscripts read *Nevertheless, brothers*. ⁱ Some manuscripts read *Spirit of God*, while others read *Holy Spirit*. ^j *Illyricum* was a Roman province on the Adriatic Sea that roughly comprised the modern-day, western Balkan nations. Apparently, Paul conceived of a circle of civilization surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, and at the time he was writing his epistle to the Romans, his ministry had taken him around the segment of this circle that stretched from Jerusalem to Illyricum. ^k Isa. 52:15 (Septuagint) ^l *Macedonia* and *Achaia* were Roman provinces that were located in the territory of Greece. ^m Some manuscripts read *the full blessing of the good news about Christ*. ⁿ Some manuscripts read *by the will of God*.

CHAPTER 16

Paul Greets His Christian Friends

(1) I am introducing our sister Phoebe to you. She is a deaconess^a in the church at Cenchrea.^b (2) So welcome her in the Lord as God's holy people should, and provide her with any assistance she may need from you. For she has been a helpful friend to many people, including me.

(3) I send my greetings to Priscilla^c and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, (4) who put their own necks on the line to save my life. I want to thank them, and so do all the Gentile churches. (5) I also send my greetings to the church that meets in their house.

I send my greetings to my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first person in the province of Asia^d to come to Christ.

(6) I send my greetings to Mary, who worked very hard for you.

(7) I send my greetings to Andronicus and Junia,^e my fellow Jews who were in prison with me. They are prominent among the apostles, and they came to Christ before I did.

(8) I send my greetings to Ampliatus, who is a dear friend in the Lord.

(9) I send my greetings to Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and to my dear friend Stachys.

(10) I send my greetings to Apelles, who is tried and true in Christ.

I send my greetings to those who belong to the family of Aristobulus.

(11) I send my greetings to my fellow countryman, Herodion.

I send my greetings to those in the family of Narcissus who are in union with Christ.

(12) I send my greetings to Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard for the Lord.

I send my greetings to dear Persis, another woman who worked very hard for the Lord.

(13) I send my greetings to Rufus,^f who was chosen by the Lord, and to his mother, who has also been a mother to me.

(14) I send my greetings to Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers who are with them.

(15) I send my greetings to Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, Olympas, and all of God's holy people who are with them.

(16) Be sure to greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send their greetings.

Final Instructions

(17) I implore you, brothers, to watch out for those who create divisions and stumbling blocks by straying beyond the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. (18) For such people are serving their own appetites instead of Christ our Lord. And with their smooth talk and flattering words, they keep deceiving the minds of those who are naive.

(19) The report about your obedience has reached everyone, and this makes me happy for you. But I want you to be wise about what is good and innocent about what is evil. (20) The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. May the grace of our Lord Jesus^g be with you.

Final Greetings

(21) Timothy, my fellow worker, sends you greetings, and so do my fellow countrymen Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater.

(22) I, Tertius, who transcribed this letter, send my greetings in the Lord.

(23) Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church,^h sends you greetings, and so do Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus.ⁱ

Final Words of Praise

(25) Now to the One Who can strengthen you by my good news and by the proclamation about Jesus Christ—the proclamation that reveals a mystery,^j which for long ages had been a silent secret, (26) but has now been disclosed, and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all the Gentiles, in keeping with the directive of the eternal God, to lead them to an obedience that results from faith—(27) to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.^k

^a The exact meaning of the Greek word that has been translated *deaconess* is uncertain. ^b *Cenchrea* served as a port for Corinth. ^c The Greek reads *Prisca*, which is a variant of *Priscilla*. ^d *Asia* was a Roman province that was located in what is now western Turkey. ^e Or *Junias*, ^f *Rufus* may have been the son of Simon, the man from Cyrene who carried Jesus' cross to Golgotha. See Mark 15:21. ^g Some manuscripts read *our Lord Jesus Christ*. ^h In the first century, Christian congregations commonly met in homes. Apparently, Gaius hosted a congregation in his home. ⁱ Some manuscripts insert (24) *May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you. Amen*. ^j The Greek term that has been translated *mystery* refers to a special truth which God has revealed to Christians. ^k Some manuscripts place verses 25-27 at the end of chapters 14 or 15. Other manuscripts place them at the end of chapter 14 and again at the end of chapter 16. Still other manuscripts omit them entirely.

STUDY GUIDE

- (1) Why did Paul say that the good news was for the Jew first, and also for the Greek? (*Rom. 1:16*)
- (2) Is God a God of love or a God of anger? Could He be both? How does God's anger differ from human anger? (*Rom. 1:18; 1 John 4:8*)
- (3) Is it possible for a person to live a sinless life through the power of the Holy Spirit? If not, why not? (*Eccl. 7:20; Rom. 3:10-12, 23; 1 John 3:6-10*)
- (4) What is justification by faith? What is its relationship to law and judgment? (*Rom. 3:21-31*)
- (5) Did Paul have a positive or negative attitude toward law? (*Rom. 3:31; 7:7-12; Gal. 3:24-25; Eph. 2:14-15*)
- (6) What does it mean for God to credit righteousness to human beings? Is it fair for Him to credit righteousness to the wicked? (*Rom. 4:4-5*)
- (7) Define original sin. Is original sin a Pauline concept? (*Rom. 5:12-19*)
- (8) Are all human beings condemned in Adam and justified in Christ? How can the actions of another person affect our standing with God? Is this fair? (*Rom. 5:12, 18*)
- (9) Is Paul describing his experience as a Christian in *Rom. 7:14-25*? If he is, what does this say about even our best efforts as Christians?
- (10) What is predestination? (*Rom. 8:29-30*)
- (11) In *Rom. 9*, is Paul telling us that God arbitrarily predestined some people to be saved and others to be lost? Or is Paul focusing on God's choice of individuals and nations to be of service to Him? (*Rom. 9:6-24*)
- (12) Do Jewish people need Jesus? Is Jesus really the Jewish Messiah? Why are many Jewish people reluctant to accept Jesus as their Messiah? Can a person be a Jew and believe in Jesus? (*Rom. 10 and 11*)
- (13) When Paul says that "all Israel will be saved," is he speaking of literal Israel or spiritual Israel? (*Rom. 11:25-27*)
- (14) How should Christians respond to tyrannical governments? Do tyrants have God's endorsement? Should tyrants be resisted? (*Rom. 13:1-7*)
- (15) Since Paul tells us that "no food is unclean in itself," does this mean that all

foods are equally good to eat? Should Christians try to eat foods that promote good health? What does the term “unclean” mean? (*Rom. 14:14*)

1 Corinthians

CHAPTER 1

Greetings from Paul

(1) From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus^a who was called by God's will, and our brother Sosthenes.^b

(2) To God's church in Corinth.^c To those who have been sanctified in their union with Christ Jesus and are called as God's holy people, along with all those everywhere who make it their practice to call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours! (3) May you have grace and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul Gives Thanks to God

(4) I am always thanking God^d for you—because of the grace He has given you in Christ Jesus. (5) For in your union with Christ, you have been enriched in every way—in speech and knowledge of every kind. (6) So our testimony about Christ has been confirmed among you.

(7) This is why you are never lacking in any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. (8) And because He will keep you strong until the end, you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus.^e (9) For you can depend on God to be faithful—the same God Who called you into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Divisions in the Church

(10) In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I urge you, brothers, to agree with one another, to put an end to your divisions, and to be completely united in your understanding and opinions. (11) My brothers, some members of Chloe's^f family have informed me that you are quarreling. (12) Let me put it this way: One person keeps repeating, "I follow Paul." Another, "I follow Apollos."^g Another, "I follow Peter."^h And still another, "I follow Christ."

(13) Has Christ been divided? Paul wasn't crucified for you, was he? Or were you actually baptized in Paul's name? (14) I am thankfulⁱ that I didn't baptize any of you except Crispus^j and Gaius.^k (15) So no one can say that you were baptized in my name.

(16) Oh yes, I also baptized the family of Stephanas.^l But beyond that, I'm not sure if I baptized anyone else. (17) For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the good news—and not with clever words, or His cross might be emptied of its power.

The Scandal of the Cross

(18) For the message about the cross is foolishness to people who are perishing. But to those of us who are being saved, it is God's power. (19) As it is written:

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the clever insight of the clever
I will bring to nothing.”^m

(20) Where is the wise person? Where is the scribe? Where is the skillful debater of this age? God has made the wisdom of the world look foolish, hasn't He? (21) For since in the wisdom of God, the world failed to learn about Him through its wisdom, God was pleased to save those who believe through the foolishness of our proclamation. (22) Jews are always asking for miraculous signs, and Greeks make it their practice to look for wisdom. (23) But we continue to preach Christ crucified—a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles! (24) However, to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is God's power and God's wisdom. (25) For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.ⁿ

(26) Brothers, think about your own situation when you were called. From a human point of view, few of you were wise. Few of you held positions of power. Few of you were of noble birth. (27) But God chose what is foolish in the world to put the wise to shame. God chose what is weak in the world to put the strong to shame. (28) And God chose what is lowly and despised in the world—what is nothing—to negate what exists. (29) He did this so that no one could boast in His presence.

(30) Now God is the Source from which your life in Christ Jesus springs, and He has made Christ our wisdom—that is, our justification, sanctification, and redemption. (31) So as it is written, “Let the person who boasts boast in the Lord.”^o

^a Some manuscripts read *Jesus Christ*. ^b Most likely, this was Sosthenes, the Corinthian synagogue leader who is mentioned in Acts 18:17. ^c *Corinth* was a major city in southern Greece that was well-known for its sexual immorality. It was located on a land bridge (the Isthmus of Corinth) that connects the Greek mainland with the southern peninsula (the Peloponnesus). ^d Some manuscripts read *my God*. ^e Some manuscripts read *our Lord Jesus Christ*.

^f It seems that Chloe was an influential woman in the Corinthian church, but nothing more is known of her. ^g *Apollos* was a Jewish Christian who proclaimed the good news in Ephesus and Greece. See Acts 18:24-28. ^h Literally, *Cephas*—Cephas (Aramaic) and Peter (Greek) both mean *rock*. ⁱ Some manuscripts read *I thank God*. ^j Most likely, this was Crispus, the Corinthian synagogue leader who is mentioned in Acts 18:8 and who became a Christian. So it seems probable that two Corinthian synagogue leaders, Crispus and Sosthenes, eventually became Christians. ^k In the first century, Christian congregations commonly met in homes. After his baptism, it seems that Gaius hosted the Corinthian church in his home.

See Rom. 16:23. ^l The family of Stephanas is mentioned again in 1 Cor. 16:15, and Stephanas may have been with Paul when he wrote this epistle. See 1 Cor. 16:17-18. ^m Isa. 29:14 ⁿ Literally, *For God's foolishness is wiser than human beings, and God's weakness is stronger than human beings.* (The Greek term that has been translated *human beings* is gender inclusive.) ^o Jer. 9:24

CHAPTER 2

Proclaiming the Crucified Christ

(1) When I came to you, brothers, I did not arrive with lofty words or wisdom as I proclaimed God's mystery ^a to you. (2) For while I was among you, I was determined to know nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. (3) I came to you with weakness, fear, and much trembling, (4) and when I spoke my message and delivered my proclamation, I did not use clever words to persuade you.^b Instead, I let the Spirit display His power, (5) so that your faith would not be grounded in human^c wisdom, but in the power of God.

God's Wisdom

(6) Nevertheless, when we are among mature people, we do speak a message of wisdom. But it is a wisdom that does not belong to this age or to the rulers of this age, who are passing off the scene. (7) No, we speak about the mystery of God's wisdom—a wisdom that has been hidden away and that God destined for our glory before time began. (8) None of the rulers of this age have understood it. For if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. (9) As a matter of fact, it is written:

“No eye has seen.
No ear has heard.
And no human mind has fathomed
the things that God has prepared
for those who love Him.”^d

(10) But^e God has revealed these things to us through the Spirit.^f For the Spirit examines everything—even the depths of God's nature. (11) Who can really understand the thoughts of another person—except that person's inner spirit? And in the same way, only God's Spirit can understand God's thoughts.

(12) Now since we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit Who comes from God, we can understand the truths that God has graciously given us. (13) We don't speak in words taught by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit—as we explain spiritual truths to spiritual people.^g (14) But an

unspiritual person does not accept these truths that come from the Spirit.^b For they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them because they must be evaluated spiritually.

(15) On the other hand, the spiritual person evaluates everything correctly and does not have to answer to anyone else's evaluation.

(16) "For who has understood
the thoughts of the Lord?
Who can instruct Him?"ⁱ

But we have the thoughts of Christ!^j

^a Some manuscripts read *God's testimony*. The Greek term that has been translated *mystery* refers to a special truth which God has revealed to Christians. See also verse 7. ^b Some manuscripts read *I did not use cleverness to persuade you*. ^c The Greek term that has been translated *human, person, or person's* in verses 5, 9, 11, and 14 is gender inclusive. ^d An allusion to Isa. 64:4 ^e Some manuscripts read *For*. ^f Some manuscripts read *His Spirit*. ^g The meaning of the Greek in the last part of verse 13 is uncertain. ^h Although most manuscripts read *the Spirit of God*, some manuscripts simply read *the Spirit*. The latter reading also finds support in the writings of a number of early church fathers who quote verse 14. ⁱ Isa. 40:13 ^j Some manuscripts read *the thoughts of the Lord!*

CHAPTER 3

Planting and Watering

(1) Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual people. Instead, I had to address you as worldly people and as babies in your union with Christ. (2) I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, because you weren't ready for it. In fact, even now you aren't ready for it (3) because you are still worldly. As long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you,^a aren't you worldly and living by human^b standards?

(4) For whenever someone declares, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," aren't you acting like typical human beings? (5) Who is Apollos anyway? And who is Paul?^c We are ministers^d who helped you become believers. And we each performed our work as the Lord assigned it. (6) I planted the seed, and Apollos watered it. But God kept it growing.

(7) Now the person who plants the seed is unimportant, and the person who waters it is unimportant, because God keeps it growing. (8) The person who plants and the person who waters are on the same team, and each person will receive a reward for his own work. (9) For we are God's fellow workers, and you are God's

field and God's building.

Building on Jesus Christ

(10) Through the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise architect, and other people are building on it. But each person should be careful how he builds. (11) For no one can lay any other foundation than the One that is already lying in place, and that is Jesus Christ. (12) Now if anyone builds on this Foundation with gold, silver, and precious stones, or with wood, hay, and straw, (13) his work will be publicly exposed. For the day of judgment^c will bring it to light, because it will be revealed by fire, and that fire will test the quality of each person's work. (14) If what he has built survives, he will be rewarded. (15) But if it is burned up, he will have to endure the loss. Yes, he will be saved, but it will be like passing through fire.

God's Sanctuary

(16) Don't you realize that you yourselves are God's sanctuary and that God's Spirit lives among^f you? (17) If anyone destroys God's sanctuary, God will destroy him. For God's sanctuary is holy, and you are that sanctuary!

Wisdom and Foolishness

(18) Don't deceive yourselves. If you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become foolish, so that you can become truly wise. (19) For the wisdom of this world is foolishness from God's perspective. As it is written,

“He traps the wise with their own trickery.”^g

(20) and again,

“The Lord knows that the opinions of the wise mean nothing.”^h

(21) So then, no more boasting about human beings! For everything belongs to you—(22) Paul, Apollos, Peter,ⁱ the world, life and death, the present and the future—all are yours. (23) And you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

^a Some manuscripts read *jealousy, quarreling, and conflicts among you*. ^b The Greek term that has been translated *human/human beings* in verses 3, 4, and 21 is gender inclusive. ^c Some manuscripts read *Who is Paul anyway? And who is Apollos?* ^d Or *servants* ^e Although the words *of judgment* do not appear in the original text, they have been added for clarification. ^f Or *in* ^g Job 5:13 ^h Ps. 94:11 ⁱ Literally, *Cephas*—Cephas (Aramaic) and Peter (Greek) both mean *rock*.

CHAPTER 4

Servants of Christ

(1) So then, we should be regarded as servants of Christ and as managers who have been entrusted with God's mysteries.^a (2) Now managers are expected to be faithful, (3) but it means very little to me if I am scrutinized by you or by any human court. Why I don't even scrutinize myself! (4) Yes, my conscience is clear, but that does not justify me. The Lord is the One Who is scrutinizing me. (5) So don't judge anything before the proper time. Wait until the Lord comes. For He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness, and He will disclose the motives of our hearts. Then each person will receive praise from God.

Fools for Christ

(6) Brothers, I have applied all this to Apollos and myself for your benefit—so you can learn from our example not to form opinions of others that go beyond what is written in the scriptures.^b Then you won't boast about one of us at the expense of the other. (7) Who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why are you boasting as if you didn't receive it?

(8) You already have the spiritual nourishment you need! You have already become rich! You have become kings without us! As a matter of fact, I wish you really had become kings, so we could reign with you! (9) For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display as the last act in the arena—like men condemned to die. We have become a spectacle to the entire universe—to angels and human beings^c alike.

(10) We are fools for Christ, but you are wise in your union with Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in high esteem, while we are dishonored. (11) To this very hour, we are hungry, thirsty, and poorly clothed. We are beaten with fists and homeless. (12) We keep wearing ourselves out as we work with our own hands. When people insult us, we bless them. When they persecute us, we endure it. (13) When they slander us, we try to comfort them. We have become the world's dirt and scum—yes, up to the present time!

Fatherly Counsel

(14) Now I'm not writing these things to try to shame you, but I am giving you counsel as my dear children. (15) You may have ten thousand chaperones in Christ, but not many fathers. For in your union with Christ Jesus, I became your father by proclaiming the good news to you. (16) So I urge you to imitate me.

(17) This is why I am sending Timothy to you. He is my dear and faithful son in

the Lord, and he will remind you of my way of life in union with Christ Jesus^d—which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

(18) Some of you have become arrogant—as if I were not coming to visit you. (19) But I will visit you soon, if it is the Lord’s will, and then I will learn not only what these arrogant people are saying, but what kind of power they have. (20) For the kingdom of God is not a matter of words, but of power. (21) So which would you prefer? Should I come to you with a club, or with love and a gentle spirit?

^aThe Greek term that has been translated *mysteries* refers to special truths which God has revealed to Christians. ^bLiterally, *so that from our example, you can learn the meaning of the saying, “Do not go beyond what is written.”* ^cThe Greek term that has been translated *human beings* is gender inclusive. ^dSome manuscripts omit *Jesus*.

CHAPTER 5

How to Deal with Sexual Immorality

(1) It is actually being reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that isn’t found even among the pagans. A man is sleeping with his father’s wife! (2) And you are proud of yourselves instead of being filled with grief! Shouldn’t you have disfellowshipped the man who did this?

(3) Now even though I am not physically present with you, I am with you in spirit. And just as if I were present, I have already pronounced judgment on the man who did this. (4) So when you gather together, my spirit and the power of our Lord Jesus will be with you. Then in the name of our Lord Jesus,^a (5) hand that man over to Satan. And as a result of your action, his sinful nature will be destroyed, and his life will be saved on the day of the Lord.^b

(6) Your boasting is not a good thing. Don’t you realize that a little yeast^c works its way through the whole batch of dough? (7) But clean out the old yeast, and you will be a fresh batch. For you really are unleavened,^d because Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed.^e (8) So let us celebrate the festival, not with old yeast, nor with the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread that doesn’t contain yeast—the bread of sincerity and truth.

(9) In my letter, I wrote that you should not associate with people who are sexually immoral. (10) Now, of course, I was not referring to the people of this world who practice sexual immorality, nor to greedy people, robbers, or idolaters. Why to avoid those people, you would have to leave the world! (11) I meant that you should not associate with any so-called brother who is sexually immoral or

greedy, or with one who is an idolater, a slanderer, a drunk, or a robber. Don't even eat with such a person!

(12) What business of mine is it to judge those outside the church? Within the church, you are the judges, (13) while God is the Judge of those outside. "So expel that evil man from among you."^f

^a Some manuscripts read *our Lord Jesus Christ*. Other manuscripts read *the Lord Jesus Christ*, or *the Lord Jesus*.^b Some manuscripts read *our Lord Jesus Christ*. Other manuscripts read *the Lord Jesus Christ* or *the Lord Jesus*.

^c In verses 6-8, yeast is a symbol of sin in the church. ^d Or *unfermented*.^e Some manuscripts read *sacrificed on our behalf*. ^f Deut. 17:7; 19:19; 21:21; 22:21, 24; 24:7

CHAPTER 6

Stop Suing One Another

(1) If any of you have complaints against other believers, how dare you take them before unrighteous courts instead of before God's holy people? (2) Don't you know that God's people will judge the world? And if the world is going to be judged by you, can't you handle trivial cases? (3) Don't you know that we will judge angels? Why not ordinary matters? (4) So if you are having legal disputes over such matters, why are you bringing them before people who have no standing in the church?^a (5) I am asking this question to make you feel ashamed. Could it be that none of you are wise enough to settle disputes between brothers? (6) Instead, one brother takes another brother to court—and this happens in front of unbelievers!

(7) The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means that you have already failed completely. Why don't you let yourselves be wronged? Why don't you let yourselves be defrauded? (8) Instead, you wrong and defraud others, and you do this to your brothers.

A Sanctuary for the Holy Spirit

(9) Don't you realize that wicked people will not inherit the kingdom of God? Stop deceiving yourselves! Sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, passive and active homosexual partners, (10) thieves, greedy people, drunks, slanderers, and robbers will not inherit the kingdom of God. (11) And some of you were those very things! But you were washed! But you were sanctified! But you were justified! All this took place in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ^b and through the Spirit of our God.

(12) I am allowed to do everything,^c but not everything is helpful. I am allowed to do everything, but I won't be controlled by anything. (13) Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food. But God will do away with both of them. The body is not intended for sexual immorality, but for the Lord. And the Lord exists for the body.

(14) Now God actually raised the Lord from the dead, and by His power, He will raise us. (15) Don't you realize that your bodies are parts of the body of Christ? And should I take the parts of Christ's body and unite them with the body of a prostitute? That would be unthinkable! (16) Don't you realize that the person who unites himself with a prostitute becomes physically one with her? For God says, "The two will become one flesh."^d (17) But the person who unites himself with the Lord is one with Him in spirit.

(18) Keep fleeing from sexual immorality. Every other sinful act that a person commits occurs outside his body, but the person who is sexually immoral is sinning against his own body. (19) Don't you realize that your body is a sanctuary for the Holy Spirit? He is in you, and you have received Him from God. You don't belong to yourselves; (20) you were bought at a price! So glorify God with your body.^e

^a The meaning of the Greek in verse 4 is uncertain. ^b Some manuscripts omit *Christ*. Other manuscripts read *our Lord Jesus Christ*. ^c This may have been a frequent expression in the Corinthian church. ^d Gen. 2:24 (Septuagint) ^e Some manuscripts read *So glorify God with your body, and with your spirit, which are God's*.

CHAPTER 7

Issues Related to Marriage

(1) Now in regard to the matters you wrote about: It is a good thing for a man to avoid sexual contact with a woman. (2) But since there are so many cases of sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband.

(3) A husband should continue to give his wife the sexual intimacy he owes her, and a wife should do the same for her husband. (4) A wife does not have sole authority over her own body, since her husband has a right to it. And in the same way, a husband does not have sole authority over his own body, since his wife has a right to it. (5) So don't deprive yourselves of each other except when you mutually agree to devote yourselves to prayer^a for a specified time. Then you should resume your relationship to avoid being tempted by Satan because you

can't control your sexual desires.

(6) I am telling you this as a concession, not as a command. (7) I wish all people^b could be like I am, but each person has his own special gift from God. One person has this gift and another that. (8) I keep telling unmarried people^c and widows that it is a good thing for them to remain unmarried like I am. (9) But if they can't keep their sexual desires under control, they should get married. For it is better to marry than to burn with lust.

(10) Now I do have a command for married people (not I really, but the Lord): A wife must not divorce her husband. (11) But if she does get a divorce, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.

(12) However, I (not the Lord) am telling the rest of you that if a brother has an unbelieving wife, and she is willing to continue living with him, he must not divorce her. (13) And if a woman has an unbelieving husband, and he is willing to continue living with her, she must not divorce him. (14) For through his wife, the unbelieving husband has been set apart for a holy purpose, and through her husband,^d the unbelieving wife has been set apart for a holy purpose. Otherwise, their^e children would not belong to God,^f but as it is, they are holy.

(15) But if the unbelieving spouse wants a divorce, let it be granted. In such cases, a brother or sister is not bound by the marriage vow.^g For God has called us^h to live in peace. (16) How do you know, wife, whether you will lead your husband to salvation? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will lead your wife to salvation?

Remain Like You Were

(17) Nevertheless, each of you should continue to live the kind of life the Lord assigned you and remain like you were when God called you. I keep giving these instructions in all the churches. (18) Were you circumcised when you were called? Then don't undo your circumcision. Were you uncircumcised when you were called? Then don't be circumcised. (19) Circumcision means nothing, and uncircumcision means nothing. But obeying God's commandments means everything.

(20) Each of you should remain like you were when God called you. (21) Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let that bother you! But if you have a chance to gain your freedom, be sure to make the most of your opportunity. (22) As a matter of fact, if you were a slave when you were called by the Lord, you are the Lord's freed person. And in the same way, if you were free when you were called, you are Christ's slave.

(23) You were bought at a price. So don't become slaves of human beings. (24) And from God's perspective, brothers, each of you should remain like you were

when you were called.

To Marry Or Not to Marry

(25) Now in regard to virgins, I have no command from the Lord. But I am giving you my opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. (26) Because of the impending crisis, I believe it is a good thing for you to remain like you are. (27) Are you married? Then don't get a divorce. Are you widowed? Then don't look for a wife. (28) But if you do get married, you have not sinned. And if a virgin gets married, she has not sinned. However, I am trying to spare you the hardship that such people will have in life.

(29) This is what I am trying to say, brothers: The time we have left is limited. So from now on, those who have wives should live as if they have none. (30) Those who are crying should live as if they are not crying. Those who are happy should live as if they are not happy. Those who are buying something should live as if they own nothing. (31) And those who are using the world's goods should live as if they don't depend on them. For this world in its present form is passing away.

(32) I want you to be free from worldly anxiety. An unmarried man is anxious about the Lord's affairs and how he can please the Lord. (33) But a married man is anxious about the affairs of this world and how he can please his wife. (34) So he is pulled in two directions. An unmarried woman or virginⁱ is anxious about the Lord's affairs, and her goal is to be holy in body and spirit. But a married woman is anxious about the affairs of this world and how she can please her husband. (35) I am saying this to help you, not to lasso you with restrictions. I want your lives to be orderly and free from distraction as you devote yourselves to the Lord.

(36) If anyone thinks he is behaving improperly toward his virgin daughter, and if she is past puberty and ripe for marriage, he should do whatever he wishes. He is not sinning. The girl and her lover should get married. (37) However, if a man has firmly settled this matter in his mind, and if he is certain that the girl feels no need for marriage, he has the legal authority to exercise his own will. So if he has made up his mind to keep his virgin daughter with him, he is also doing what is right. (38) Therefore, the man who gives his virgin daughter in marriage is doing what is right. But the man who declines to give her in marriage is doing even better.^j

(39) A wife is bound to her husband as long as he is alive. But if her husband falls asleep,^k she is free to marry anyone she wishes, provided he is in union with the Lord. (40) However, it is my opinion that she will be happier if she remains like she is—and I think I have God's Spirit also!

^a Some manuscripts read *fasting and prayer*. ^b The Greek term that has been translated *people/human beings* in verses 7 and 23 is gender inclusive. ^c Or possibly, *I keep telling widowers* ^d Literally, *through the brother*; ^e Literally, *your* ^f Literally, *would be unclean*, ^g Literally, *is not in bondage*. ^h Some manuscripts read *you*. ⁱ Some manuscripts read *An unmarried woman or unmarried virgin*. Other manuscripts read *A woman or an unmarried virgin*. ^j The meaning of the

Greek in verses 36-38 is uncertain. ^k For Paul, *sleep* was a euphemism for death.

CHAPTER 8

Concerning Food Sacrificed to Idols

(1) Now about food sacrificed to idols: We are aware that all of us have knowledge. And knowledge makes us proud, but love builds us up. (2) If anyone thinks he knows something, he still doesn't know it as well as he should. (3) But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.^a

(4) So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We are aware that an idol has no real existence in the world and that there is only one God. (5) For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (and there are many of these gods and lords), (6) yet for us, there is only one God, the Father. Everything came from Him, and we live for Him. And there is only one Lord, Jesus Christ. Everything came into being through Him, and we live by Him.

(7) But not everyone understands this. Some people are so accustomed to idolatry that when they eat such food, they still think of it as an idolatrous sacrifice, and their weak consciences are defiled. (8) However, food will not affect our standing with God. We are no worse off if we don't eat it and no better off if we do.

(9) But see to it that your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. (10) For if anyone with a weak conscience sees a knowledgeable person like you eating in the temple of an idol,^b won't you be encouraging him to eat food that has been sacrificed to idols? (11) And if that happens, the weak brother for whom Christ died will be destroyed by your knowledge.

(12) Now when you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak consciences, you are sinning against Christ. (13) So if food causes my brother to stumble in his faith, I will never eat meat again, because I don't want to make him stumble.

^a Some manuscripts read *But if anyone loves, he is known*. Other manuscripts read *But if anyone loves God, he is known*. ^b Apparently, some of the Corinthian Christians believed it was acceptable for them to dine in a pagan temple, since idols are not real gods. Although Paul did not disagree with their logic, he did not recommend this practice because of the example they would be setting for their fellow believers who were not as mature in their thinking. It is also possible that on certain civic occasions, it was difficult for Christians to excuse themselves from eating a meal in a pagan temple.

CHAPTER 9

Paul and His Rights

(1) Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Haven't I seen Jesus our Lord? Aren't you the result of my work in the Lord's service? (2) Even if I am not an apostle to other people, surely I am to you! For in your union with the Lord, you are the seal which proves that I am an apostle.

(3) This is how I defend myself before those who want to cross-examine me. (4) Don't we have the right to eat and drink? (5) Don't we have the right to be accompanied by a Christian wife^a like the other apostles and the Lord's brothers^b and Peter?^c (6) Or do only Barnabas and I have to work for a living?^d (7) Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating its fruit? Who takes care of a flock without drinking its milk? (8) Am I merely referring to illustrations from human^e life, or does the law also say these things? (9) As a matter of fact, it is written in the law of Moses: "You must not muzzle an ox that is treading out the grain."^f But is God concerned about oxen? (10) Or is He really saying this for our benefit? Yes, this was written for our benefit. For the person who plows and the person who threshes the grain should both perform their work with the hope of enjoying the harvest.

(11) So if we sowed spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap material blessings from you? (12) And if others enjoy the rightful claim they have on you, aren't we even more deserving? But we have not used this right. Instead, we endure everything that comes our way, so that we won't hinder the good news about Christ.

(13) Don't you realize that those who work at the temple eat food that comes from the temple? And those who serve at the altar get their share of its offerings, don't they? (14) Now in the same way, the Lord has directed that those who proclaim the good news should receive their living from the good news.

(15) But I have not used any of these rights. Nor have I written this to claim such rights for myself. Why I would rather die than let anyone deprive me of my reason for boasting. (16) And yet when I preach the good news, I have nothing to boast about because I have an obligation to preach it. Woe to me if I don't preach the good news!

(17) Now if I preach it because I want to, I have a reward. But even if I don't want to preach it, the responsibility has been entrusted to me. (18) So what is my reward? It is merely the satisfaction of preaching the good news free of charge, without making full use of my rights in preaching it.

All Things to All People

(19) Yes, I am free from the control of all people. But I have made myself a slave to all people, in order to win more of them. (20) I became like a Jew to the Jews, in order to win Jews. I became like someone under law^g to those who are under it (although I myself am not under law),^h in order to win those who are under law. (21) To those who don't have the law, I became like someone without it (although I am really not without God's law, since I am subject to the law of Christ), in order to win those who don't have the law. (22) I became weak to those who are weak, in order to win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that by every possible means, I can save some of them. (23) I am doing all these things for the sake of the good news—so we can be partners in its proclamation.

(24) Don't you know that all the runners in a stadium compete, but only one gets the prize? So run for the prize! (25) And all the athletes in the games practice total self-control. They do this to get a temporary crown of laurel, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. (26) So I keep running with a clear goal ahead of me. For I am not a boxer who beats the air. (27) On the contrary, it is my practice to beat my body black and blue and make it my slave. I do this so that after preaching to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

^a Literally, *a sister as a wife* ^b Paul probably had Jesus' brothers, James and Jude, in mind. ^c Literally, *Cephas*—Cephas (Aramaic) and Peter (Greek) both mean *rock*. ^d Paul and Barnabas did not accept pay for their evangelistic ministry. Instead, they performed manual labor to support themselves. ^e The Greek term that has been translated *human* is gender inclusive. ^f Deut. 25:4 ^g In Pauline thought, to be *under law* means to be under the law as a method of salvation. But this method of salvation doesn't work, since it only brings condemnation to guilty sinners who have broken the law. ^h Some manuscripts omit the words in parentheses.

CHAPTER 10

Warnings from the Old Testament

(1) Brothers, I want you to know that all of our ancestors^a were under the cloud, and they all passed through the sea. (2) They were all baptized^b into union with Moses in the cloud and in the sea. (3) They all ate the same spiritual food, (4) and they all drank the same spiritual drink. For they kept drinking from the spiritual Rock that accompanied them, and that Rock was Christ. (5) Nevertheless, the fact that their bodies were scattered over the desert indicates that God was not pleased with most of them.

(6) Now these events have become examples for us. They serve as warnings that we should not desire what is evil, like those people did. (7) So don't be idolaters, like some of them were. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and got up to indulge in pleasure."^c (8) We should not commit sexual sins, like some of them did. And on a single day, twenty-three thousand of them died. (9) We should not put Christ^d to the test, like some of them did. And snakes began to annihilate them. (10) Nor should we grumble, like some of them did. For the angel of death destroyed them.

(11) Now these things that happened to them were symbolic, and they were recorded as warnings for us who are living at the end of the ages. (12) So if you think you are standing firm, see to it that you don't fall! (13) For no temptation has overtaken you that is unknown to human beings. But God is trustworthy. He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can endure. Instead, when you are being tempted, He will also provide a way of escape, so you can bear it.

(14) Therefore, my dear friends, continue to flee from idolatry. (15) I am speaking to wise people. So judge what I am saying for yourselves.

A Warning about Pagan Sacrifices

(16) Isn't the blessed cup that we continue to bless a communion with the blood of Christ? And isn't the bread we continue to break a communion with the body of Christ?

(17) Now since there is one kind of bread, we who are many are one body. For all of us keep partaking of that one kind of bread.

(18) Think about the people of Israel. Don't those who eat the sacrifices commune with what is on the altar? (19) So what am I saying? Am I suggesting that idols or the food that is sacrificed to them amount to anything? (20) Hardly! But pagan sacrifices are really offered to demons, not to a god.^e And I don't want you to be in communion with demons! (21) You cannot drink from the Lord's cup and the

cup of demons. You cannot eat at the Lord's table and the table of demons. (22) Or are we trying to make the Lord jealous? We aren't stronger than He is, are we?

Christian Freedom and Its Limits

(23) Everything is allowed,^f but not everything is helpful. Everything is allowed, but not everything builds people up. (24) You should not be seeking your own good, but the good of others.

(25) You can eat any item that is sold in the meat market without examining your conscience. (26) "For the earth and all the things that are on it belong to the Lord."^g

(27) Now if an unbeliever invites you to a meal, and you want to go, eat whatever is served without examining your conscience. (28) But if anyone tells you that the food was a temple offering, don't eat it. I am saying this out of consideration for the person who informed you and because of conscience.^h (29) (I mean the other person's conscience, not yours!) For why should my freedom be judged by another person's conscience? (30) If I participate in a meal with a thankful heart, why should I be slandered because of something I am thankful for?ⁱ

(31) So whether you are eating or drinking or doing anything else, continue to do it all for the glory of God. (32) Don't be stumbling blocks to Jews or Greeks or to the church of God, (33) just as I am not. For I keep trying to please everyone in everything I do. I am not seeking my own good, but the good of many people, so that they can be saved.

^a Or *fathers* ^b Some manuscripts read *They all baptized themselves*. ^c Ex. 32:6—literally, *got up to play*. ^d Some manuscripts read *the Lord*, while other manuscripts read *God*. ^e Or *not to God*. ^f This may have been a frequent expression in the Corinthian church. ^g Ps. 24:1 (Septuagint) ^h Some manuscripts add *For the earth and all the things that are on it belong to the Lord*. ⁱ Paul poses the questions in verses 29 and 30 as if they are being asked by the Corinthian Christians.

CHAPTER 11

Counsel about Wearing Veils

(1) Imitate me, just as I imitate Christ. (2) I applaud you^a for remembering me in every way and for retaining the Christian traditions as I delivered them to you.

(3) But I want you to realize that Christ is the Head of every man, and a husband is the head of his wife,^b and God is the Head of Christ. (4) Any man who wears something down over his head when he prays or prophesies brings disgrace on his head. (5) And any woman who prays or prophesies with an unveiled head brings disgrace on her head. In fact, she is exactly like a woman who has had her head shaved. (6) So if a woman refuses to wear a veil, she might as well have her hair cut off. And since it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, she should wear a veil.

(7) Now since a man is the image and glory of God, he should never veil his head. But a woman is man's glory. (8) For the man did not come from the woman, but the woman from the man. (9) And the man was not created for the woman, but the woman for the man. (10) This is why a woman should maintain control over her head^c—out of respect for the angels.^d

(11) Nevertheless, in our union with the Lord, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. (12) For just as woman came from man, in the same way, man is born through woman. And everything comes from God.

(13) So you must decide this matter among yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God without wearing a veil? (14) Nature itself doesn't really teach you that it is shameful for a man to have long hair, (15) nor does it teach you that long hair is a woman's glory.^e For hair has been given to her as a covering. (16) But if anyone intends to argue about removing veils,^f we don't have such a custom. Nor do any of God's churches.

Counsel about the Lord's Supper

(17) Now as I give you the following instructions, I am not applauding you. For your meetings do more harm than good. (18) First of all, I keep hearing that there are divisions among you when you assemble as a church. And to some extent, I believe it. (19) Why there have to be factions among you to demonstrate which of you have God's approval! (20) So when you assemble together, you are not really eating the Lord's supper. (21) As a matter of fact, when you eat, each person goes ahead with his own supper without waiting for anyone else.^g And one person goes hungry, while another gets drunk. (22) Surely you have homes to eat and drink in, don't you? Or are you trying to show contempt for God's church by shaming those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I applaud you for

this? Certainly not!

(23) For I passed on to you what I received from the Lord: On the night He was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread, (24) and after He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “This is My body,^h which is for you.ⁱ Continue doing this in memory of Me.”

(25) Likewise, after supper, He took the cup and said, “This cup is the new covenant^l in My blood. Whenever you drink from it, continue doing it in memory of Me.” (26) For whenever you eat this bread and drink from this cup, you are proclaiming the Lord’s death until He comes.

(27) Therefore, if anyone eats the bread or drinks from the Lord’s cup in a careless manner, he will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. (28) So a person^k should examine himself before he eats the bread and drinks from the cup. (29) For the person who eats and drinks^l without recognizing the body^m is eating and drinking condemnation on himself. (30) This is why many of you are weak and sick, and a number of you are sleeping.ⁿ (31) But if we were examining ourselves, we would not be condemned. (32) Nevertheless, when the Lord judges us, we are being disciplined, to keep us from being condemned with the world.

(33) So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. (34) And if you are really hungry, you should eat at home, so you won’t conduct an assembly that will bring condemnation on you.

Now in regard to the other matters, I will give you instructions when I arrive.

^a Some manuscripts read *I applaud you, brothers*,. ^b Or *man is the head of woman*, ^c Or *should have a sign of authority on her head*—Paul’s meaning has been debated. ^d Literally, *because of the angels*—although Paul’s meaning has been debated, he was probably suggesting that angels are unseen guests in Christian worship and that disrespect and lack of modesty are offensive to them. ^e Or *Doesn’t nature itself really teach you that it is shameful for a man to have long hair; (15) but that long hair is a woman’s glory?* ^f Although the words *about removing veils* do not appear in the original text, they have been added for clarification. ^g Among the early Christians, the Lord’s Supper was commonly celebrated along with a meal. ^h Some manuscripts read “*Take this and eat it. This is My body.*” ⁱ Some manuscripts read *which is being broken for you*. ^j For the significance of the new covenant, see Jer. 31:31-34. ^k The Greek term that has been translated *person* is gender inclusive. ^l Some manuscripts read *For the person who eats and drinks in a careless manner*. ^m Some manuscripts read *the Lord’s body*. ⁿ For Paul, *sleep* was a euphemism for death.

CHAPTER 12

Spiritual Gifts

(1) Brothers, I want you to be informed about spiritual gifts. (2) For you realize that when you were pagans, you were often enticed by ecstasy and led to idols that cannot talk. (3) So I want you to understand that no one who is speaking by God's Spirit can say that Jesus is cursed. And no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

(4) There are different spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit. (5) There are different ministries, but the same Lord. (6) There are different abilities, but the same God produces all of them in everyone.

(7) Now the Spirit reveals Himself to each person for the common good. (8) The Spirit gives one person a message of wisdom, while another person receives a message of knowledge from the same Spirit. (9) The same Spirit gives another person faith, while another person receives power to heal from that one Spirit.^a (10) Another can perform miracles. Another can prophesy. Another can distinguish between spirits. Another can speak in different languages. Another can translate those languages. (11) All these gifts are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He distributes them to each person as He wishes.

One Body with Many Parts

(12) For just as the human body is a unit, and yet it has many parts (and all of its parts, though many, form one body), so it is with Christ. (13) For by one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body. And whether we are Jews or Greeks, whether we are slaves or free, we were all given that one Spirit to drink.

(14) Now the human body is not composed of one part, but of many parts. (15) Suppose the foot were to say, "Because I am not a hand, I don't belong to the body." That would not keep it from being a part of the body, would it? (16) Or suppose the ear were to say, "Because I am not an eye, I don't belong to the body." That would not keep it from being a part of the body either, would it? (17) If the whole body were an eye, how could we hear? If the whole body were an ear, how could we smell? (18) As a matter of fact, God placed each of the parts in the body and fitted them in as He wished. (19) But if everything were a single part, how could there be a body? (20) So there are many parts, but one body.

(21) The eye can't say to the hand, "I don't need you." Nor can the head say to the feet, "I don't need you." (22) On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem weaker are the essential ones. (23) And we treat the parts of the body that seem less honorable with greater honor, while our private parts are treated with a special modesty (24) that our presentable parts don't need. Nevertheless, when

God fitted the various parts of the human body together, He gave greater honor to the parts that lacked it. (25) So instead of there being disharmony in the body, all of its parts have equal concern for one another. (26) If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it. If one part receives praise, all the parts rejoice with it.

The More Important Gifts

(27) Now since you are the body of Christ, each one of you is an individual part of it. (28) And God placed certain people in the church: First apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then those who perform miracles, those who have the power to heal, those who perform helpful deeds, those with administrative abilities, and those who speak in different languages. (29) Is everyone an apostle? Is everyone a prophet? Is everyone a teacher? Can everyone perform miracles? (30) Has everyone received power to heal? Can everyone speak in different languages? Can everyone translate those languages? (31) But continue to set your hearts on the better gifts.

And now I will show you a way that is beyond comparison!^b

^a Some manuscripts read *from that same Spirit*. ^b This is the way of love that Paul describes in chapter 13.

CHAPTER 13

The Importance of Love

(1) If I speak in the languages of human beings^a and angels, but have no love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. (2) If I have the gift of prophecy and can understand all mysteries^b and every kind of knowledge, and if I have enough faith to move mountains, but have no love, I am nothing. (3) If I dole out all my possessions and give up my body, so that I can boast about these things, but have no love, I gain nothing.^c

(4) Love is patient and kind. Love is not envious. Love^d is not boastful or proud. (5) It is not rude or self-seeking. It is not irritable, nor does it hold grudges. (6) It does not delight in wickedness, but it delights to side with the truth. (7) It protects everything, believes everything, hopes for everything, and endures everything.

(8) Love never fails. But as for the gift of prophecy, it will pass away. As for the gift of speaking in foreign languages, it will cease. And as for the gift of knowledge, it will be set aside. (9) For our knowledge is incomplete, and our prophesying is incomplete. (10) But when everything is completed,^c the incomplete things will disappear.

(11) When I was a child, I spoke, thought, and reasoned like a child. But since I have become a man, I have put my childish ways behind me.

(12) Now we see a hazy reflection in a mirror,^f but then we will see face to face. Now my knowledge is incomplete, but then my knowledge will be complete, just as God's knowledge of me is complete. (13) And now these three things remain—faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love!

^aThe Greek term that has been translated *human beings* is gender inclusive.

^bThe Greek term that has been translated *mysteries* refers to special truths which God has revealed to Christians. ^cSome manuscripts read *and give up my body to be burned, but have no love, I gain nothing*. ^dSome manuscripts read *It*. ^eLiterally, *But when the complete state arrives*, ^fSince ancient mirrors were made of polished metal, their reflections were blurred and hazy.

CHAPTER 14

Two Spiritual Gifts Compared

(1) Keep pursuing love, and make it your practice to desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. (2) When someone speaks in an unknown language,^a he is not speaking to human beings,^b but to God. For since he is speaking mysteries^c by the Spirit,^d no one understands him. (3) On the other hand, when someone prophesies, he is speaking to human beings in a way that is constructive, encouraging, and comforting.

(4) The person who speaks in an unknown language is building himself up. But the person who prophesies is building the church up. (5) I wish all of you could speak in unknown languages, but I would rather have you prophesy. It is better for a person to prophesy than to speak in unknown languages (unless the person translates what he says so that the church can be built up).

(6) Now, brothers, if I come to you and speak in unknown languages, what good will it do you? How can I benefit you unless I share a revelation with you, or some knowledge, prophecy, or teaching? (7) Why even inanimate objects like the flute or harp produce sounds. But if there is no difference in the notes, how can anyone tell what tune is being played?

(8) As a matter of fact, if a trumpet produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare for battle? (9) And in the same way, if the words your tongue produces are indistinct, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will be speaking into the air! (10) There are probably many different languages in the world, and all of them have meaning. (11) But if I don't know the meaning of a language, I am a foreigner to the person who speaks it, and he is a foreigner to me.

(12) Now in the same way, since you are enthusiastic about spiritual gifts, keep trying to excel in the ones that build up the church. (13) This is why the person who speaks in an unknown language should pray for the ability to translate what he says. (14) After all, if I am praying in an unknown language, my spirit is praying, but my mind is unproductive. (15) So what should I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind. I will sing praises with my spirit, but I will also sing praises with my mind.

(16) If you are speaking a blessing with your spirit, how can an uninstructed person say “Amen” to your prayer of thanksgiving when he has no idea what you are saying? (17) Yes, it is good that you are giving thanks, but the other person is not being built up. (18) I thank God that I speak in unknown languages more than any of you. (19) But in church, I would rather speak five intelligent words to instruct others than ten thousand words in an unknown language.

(20) Brothers, stop being childish in your thinking. When it comes to evil, be babies. But in your thinking, be mature. (21) It is written in the law:

“In other languages
and by the mouths of foreigners,
I will speak to this people.
But even then, they will not listen to Me,
says the Lord.”^e

(22) So the gift of languages is a sign for unbelievers, not believers. But prophecy is a sign for believers, not unbelievers.

(23) Now if the entire church assembles together, and everyone is speaking in unknown languages, when uninstructed people or unbelievers come in, won't they say that you are raving maniacs? (24) But if everyone is prophesying when an unbeliever or uninstructed person comes in, he will be convicted of sin and called to account by everyone. (25) And after the secrets of his heart are exposed, he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is really among you.

Maintaining Order in Church

(26) So what should be done, brothers? When you assemble, each one of you has a hymn, lesson, revelation, unknown language, or translation to contribute. But everything should be done to build up the church. (27) If an unknown language is being spoken, it should be limited to two or at most three people. One person at a time should speak, and someone should translate it. (28) And if a translator is not present, the speaker should remain silent in church and speak to himself and to God.

(29) Two or three prophets should speak, and the other people should evaluate what is said. (30) And if God gives a revelation to another person who is seated, the first speaker should stop talking. (31) For all of you can take turns at prophesying,

and as a result, everyone should be able to learn and receive encouragement. (32) Yes, the prophetic spirit is always subject to the control of prophets! (33) For God is not a God of confusion, but of peace—as He is in all the congregations of His holy people.

(34) Now women should remain silent in the churches.^f They are not allowed to speak, but should remain in submission, as the law says. (35) And if they want to learn anything, they should pose questions to their own husbands at home. For it is disgraceful when a woman speaks in church.^g

(36) Did God’s message originate with you? Are you the only people it has reached? (37) If anyone seems to be a prophet or a spiritually gifted person, he should acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord’s commandment. (38) And if anyone ignores what I am writing, he should be ignored.^h

(39) Therefore, my brothers, make it your practice to desire the gift of prophecy, and don’t forbid speaking in unknown languages. (40) But everything should be done in a decent and orderly way.

^a Most expositors believe that Paul is discussing an ecstatic utterance that could not be understood by anyone without an accompanying miraculous gift of translation. However, a minority of expositors believe that a gift of actual foreign languages is being addressed and that the Corinthian Christians were misusing this gift by speaking in foreign languages when no one who could understand those languages was present. ^b The Greek term that has been translated *human beings* is gender inclusive. See also verse 3. ^c The Greek term that has been translated *mysteries* refers to special truths which God has revealed to Christians. ^d Or *with his spirit*. ^e An allusion to Isa. 28:11-12 ^f Or *For God is not a God of confusion, but of peace. Now as in all the congregations of God’s holy people, (34) women should remain silent in the churches.* ^g Some manuscripts place verses 34-35 after verse 40. ^h Some manuscripts read *And if anyone is ignorant of what I am writing, let him remain ignorant.*

CHAPTER 15

Paul Defines the Good News

(1) Now brothers, I am drawing your attention to the good news that I proclaimed to you—which you received and on which you have taken your stand. (2) If you are clinging to the message that I proclaimed to you, you are also being saved by this good news (unless you were not serious when you believed).

(3) For I passed the message that I received on to you, and it has top priority:^a Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. (4) He was buried. He was raised on the third day according to the scriptures. (5) And He appeared to Peter,^b and then to the twelve.

(6) After that, He appeared to more than 500 of the brothers at the same time, most of whom remain alive, though some have fallen asleep.^c (7) Then He appeared to James,^d and then to all the apostles. (8) Finally, He even appeared to me, although I was like an aborted baby. (9) For am the least of the apostles, and I don't even deserve to be called an apostle because I persecuted God's church. (10) But God's grace made me what I am, and that grace was not wasted on me. On the contrary, I have outdone all the others in my work—not I, really, but God's grace that was with me.

(11) So whether it was I or someone else, this is the message we continue to preach. And this is what you believed.

The Dead Will Be Raised

(12) Now if we continue to preach that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you claim that there is no resurrection of the dead? (13) If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised. (14) And if Christ has not been raised, our proclamation is meaningless, and so is your^e faith. (15) What is more, we are found to be false witnesses about God because we have testified that God raised Christ from the dead. But He did not raise Christ if it is really true that the dead are not raised. (16) For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. (17) And if Christ has not been raised, your faith means nothing, and you are still in your sins. (18) Moreover, those who have fallen asleep in union with Christ have perished. (19) If it is merely for this life that we have put our hope in Christ, we are more pathetic than any other people.^f

(20) But as a matter of fact, Christ has been raised from the dead—the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. (21) For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead also comes through a Human Being.^g (22) For just as all people continue to die because of their union with Adam, in the same way, all will be made alive because of their union with Christ.

(23) But each person will experience this in the proper sequence: Christ was raised first, and afterward at His coming, those who belong to Christ. (24) Then the end will come, when Christ will deliver the kingdom to God the Father, after He has destroyed every spiritual ruler, authority, and power. (25) For He must continue to reign until God has put all His enemies under His feet. (26) And the last enemy to be destroyed will be death. (27) For “God has put everything under His feet.”^h However, when scripture says that everything has been put under Him, it is obvious that this excludes God Himself, Who put everything under Christ. (28) But after God has done this, the Son Himself will also be subject to the One who put everything under Him, so that God can be all in all.

(29) Now if there is no resurrection, what about those people who are being baptized on behalf of the dead?ⁱ What will they accomplish by this? If the dead are not raised, why are people being baptized on their behalf? (30) And why do we put ourselves in constant danger every hour? (31) I am facing death every day! I swear it, brothers,^j by my boasting about you, and I have this right in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(32) If I had merely human hopes when I fought with wild beasts in Ephesus,^k what would I have gained? If the dead are not raised,

“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!”^l

(33) Don’t be deceived:

“Bad friends always corrupt good morals.”^m

(34) So return to a sensible and righteous life. And stop sinning. For some of you have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame!

The Nature of the Resurrected Body

(35) But someone may ask, “How are the dead raised? What kind of body will they have when they come from the grave?” (36) What foolish questions! The seed you sow does not come to life unless it dies. (37) And what you sow is not the bodily form the plant will become. No, it is a bare kernel—perhaps of wheat or of some other variety. (38) But God gives it the bodily form He wants it to have, and he gives each kind of seed its own bodily form.

(39) Not all flesh is the same. Human beings have one kind of flesh; domestic animals have another, and birds and fish another. (40) There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies. But the splendor of the heavenly bodies is different from the splendor of the earthly bodies. (41) The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another, and the stars another. In fact, star differs from star in splendor.

(42) Now it will be the same when the dead are raised. The body that is sown decays, but the body that is raised cannot decay. (43) The body is sown in dishonor, but it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, but it is raised in power.

(44) It is sown as an unspiritual body, but it is raised as a spiritual body. For since there is an unspiritual body, there is also a spiritual body.

(45) As a matter of fact, this is what is written: “The first man, Adam, became a living being.”ⁿ But the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.^o (46) Notice that the spiritual did not come first. The unspiritual came first and then the spiritual. (47) The first man came from the dust of the earth, but the second Man came from heaven.^p (48) So then, those who are made of dust resemble the man who came from dust, but those who are heavenly resemble the heavenly Man. (49) And just as we have borne the image of the man who came from dust, we will^q also bear the image of the heavenly Man.

(50) Brothers, this is what I am trying to say: Sinful human nature^r cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Nor can a decaying body inherit something that cannot decay. (51) Listen, I am telling you a mystery:^s We won’t all fall asleep, but we will all be changed^t—(52) in an instant, in the blinking of an eye, at the last trumpet call. For the trumpet will sound. The dead will be raised never to decay. And we will be changed.

(53) Yes, this decaying body must be clothed with a substance that cannot decay, and this mortal body must be clothed with a substance that cannot die. (54) Now when this decaying body has been clothed with a substance that cannot decay, and this mortal body has been clothed with a substance that cannot die, then the message that is written will become reality: “Death has been swallowed up in victory!”^u

(55)“Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?”^v

(56) The sting of death comes from sin, and sin gains its power from the law. (57) But thanks be to God! He keeps giving us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

(58) So then, my dear brothers, continue to be steadfast and unmovable. Always devote yourselves to the Lord’s work. For you are aware that your hard work is never wasted when you are in union with the Lord.

^aOr *For I first passed the message that I received on to you*. ^bLiterally, *Cephas*—Cephas (Aramaic) and Peter (Greek) both mean *rock*. ^cFor Paul, *sleep* was a euphemism for death. See also verses 18, 20, and 51. ^dThis was Jesus’ brother James. ^eSome manuscripts read *our*. ^fThe Greek term that has been translated *people, human, human being(s), or Human Being* in verses 19, 21, 32, and 39 is gender inclusive.^gIn verse 21, Paul is contrasting Adam and Christ. ^hPs. 8:6 ⁱPaul’s reference to baptism *on behalf of the dead* is very obscure, and there is no consensus on what this practice involved. ^jSome manuscripts omit *brothers*. ^k*Ephesus* was a famous port city on the west coast of Asia Minor and the capital of the Roman province of Asia. The expression *wild beasts* probably refers to Paul’s human opponents in Ephesus. ^lIsa. 22:13 (Septuagint) ^mThis is a quotation from the Greek poet Menander (fourth-third century B.C.). ⁿGen. 2:7 ^oChrist’s

divine nature is pure spirit, and it imparts life through His saving work. ^p Some manuscripts read *but the second Man is the Lord Who came from heaven.* ^q Some manuscripts read *let us.* ^r Literally, *Flesh and blood* ^s The Greek term that has been translated *mystery* refers to a special truth which God has revealed to Christians. ^t Some manuscripts read *We will all fall asleep, but we won't all be changed.* Other manuscripts read *We won't all fall asleep, and we won't all be changed.* Still other manuscripts read *We will all be raised, but we won't all be changed.* ^u Isa. 25:8 ^v Hos. 13:14

CHAPTER 16

A Special Offering

(1) Now about the collection for God's holy people: You are to follow the instructions that I gave the churches in Galatia.^a (2) On the first day of every week, when you are at home, each of you should set aside and save whatever extra money you have succeeded in earning, so that no collections will have to be made when I come. (3) Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of identification to those you approve and send them to Jerusalem with your gift.^b (4) And if it seems appropriate for me to go also, I will accompany them.

Paul's Travel Plans

(5) Now after I travel through Macedonia,^c I will visit you. For I intend to travel through Macedonia, (6) and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter. Then you can send me on my way, wherever I decide to go. (7) For I don't want to see you now just in passing, because I hope to spend some time with you if the Lord allows it. (8) But I will be staying in Ephesus^d until Pentecost,^e (9) because a great door for productive work is standing open before me, although many people are opposing me.

Timothy and Apollos

(10) If Timothy comes your way, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you. For since he is doing the Lord's work, just as I am, (11) no one should look down on him. But send him on his way in peace, so he can return to me. For I am expecting him along with the other brothers.

(12) Now about our brother Apollos:^f I strongly urged him to visit you with the other brothers, but it was not at all God's will^g for him to make a visit at the present time. However, he will visit you when the time is right.

Final Instructions

(13) Stay awake! Keep standing firm in the faith! Continue to play the man and be strong! (14) Everything should be done with love.

(15) You are aware that the members of the family of Stephanas^h were the first converts in Achaia,ⁱ and they have devoted themselves to serving God's holy people. I urge you, brothers, (16) to submit to such people and to anyone else who keeps cooperating and working hard. (17) I am glad that Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus have arrived, because they have made up for your absence.^j (18) For they have cheered my spirit and yours as well. So give special recognition to such people.

Final Greetings

(19) The churches in the province of Asia^k send you greetings. Aquila, Priscilla,^l and the church that meets in their house send you many greetings in the Lord. (20) All the brothers send you greetings. Be sure to greet one another with a holy kiss. (21) Here is my greeting in my own handwriting—from Paul.

(22) If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be eternally condemned! May our Lord come!^m (23) May the grace of the Lord Jesusⁿ be with you. (24) My love to all of you in your union with Christ Jesus.^o

^a It is uncertain whether Paul is referring to the region of Galatia or the Roman province of Galatia. The Roman province included the region, which was located in central Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), plus additional territory to the south. ^b It seems that Paul was promoting a special offering for needy Christians in Jerusalem. ^c *Macedonia* was a Roman province on the northern fringe of Greece. ^d *Ephesus* was a famous port city on the west coast of Asia Minor and the capital of the Roman province of Asia. ^e *Pentecost* is also known as the Festival of Weeks. It comes in late spring or early summer, on the fiftieth day after Passover. ^f *Apollos* was Jewish Christian who proclaimed the good news in Ephesus and Greece. See Acts 18:24-28. ^g Literally, *a will* ^h The family of Stephanas is also mentioned in 1 Cor. 1:16. ⁱ *Achaia* was the Roman province that comprised classical Greece, and its capital was Corinth. ^j Or *because they have supplied what was lacking from you*. ^k *Asia* was a Roman province that was located in what is now western Turkey. ^l The Greek reads *Prisca*, which is a variant of *Priscilla*. ^m Paul uses the Aramaic expression *Maranatha* here. This expression can also mean *Our Lord is coming*. ⁿ Some manuscripts read *the Lord Jesus Christ*. ^o Some manuscripts conclude with the word *Amen*.

STUDY GUIDE

- (1) How can Paul's counsel to the Corinthian Christians benefit modern congregations that are experiencing conflict and division? *(1 Cor. 1:10-17; 3:1-9)*
- (2) Why is the message of the cross a stumbling block to so many people? *(1 Cor. 1:18-25)*
- (3) What did Paul mean when he counseled us to use good building materials? *(1 Cor. 3:10-15)*
- (4) What did Paul mean when he directed the Corinthian Christians to hand the man who was practicing sexual immorality over to Satan? Does this passage have an application to the use of discipline in the modern church? *(1 Cor. 5:1-5)*
- (5) In what sense are our bodies sanctuaries for the Holy Spirit? What are the implications of this? *(1 Cor. 6:12-20)*
- (6) Why did Paul recommend remaining unmarried? Did he contradict himself? *(1 Cor. 7; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 5:11-14)*
- (7) Does Paul's counsel about food sacrificed to idols contradict the decision of the Jerusalem Council? *(1 Cor. 8; Acts 15:19-20, 28-29)*
- (8) Should Christian women cover their heads in public worship, or was Paul's counsel culturally conditioned? *(1 Cor. 11:1-16)*
- (9) What is the gift of prophecy, and why is it more important than the gift of speaking in unknown languages? *(1 Cor. 14:1-25)*
- (10) Do you think that these unknown languages were actual foreign languages, or were they an ecstatic type of speech that no one could understand? *(1 Cor. 14; Acts 2:1-13)*
- (11) Should Christian women be allowed to speak in modern congregations? Should they be ordained as pastors? Was Paul's counsel about women speaking in church culturally conditioned, or was it intended for all time? *(1 Cor. 14:34-35; 1 Tim. 2:11-15)*
- (12) What do you think Paul had in mind when he spoke of people being baptized on behalf of the dead? *(1 Cor. 15:29)*
- (13) Why is the resurrection such an important belief for Christians? *(1 Cor. 15)*

2 Corinthians

CHAPTER 1

Greetings from Paul

(1) From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, and our brother Timothy.

To God's church in Corinth,^a along with all of His holy people throughout Achaia.^b

(2) May you have grace and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul Praises God

(3) Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—the Father of mercy and the God of all encouragement. (4) He keeps encouraging us in all our hardship, and as a result, we can encourage other people in all their hardship. We can do this because we ourselves are being encouraged by God. (5) For just as Christ's suffering is overflowing into our lives, in the same way, the encouragement that we receive through Christ is overflowing. (6) If we are facing hardship, it is for your encouragement and salvation. If we are being encouraged, we can encourage you. And this empowers you to endure the same kind of suffering we endure. (7) So our hope for you is firmly grounded, because we know that just as you share in our suffering, you will also share in our encouragement.

How God Rescued Paul

(8) Brothers, we want you to know about the hardship we experienced in the province of Asia.^c We were so completely crushed beyond what we could endure that we even despaired of living. (9) In fact, we felt the death sentence within ourselves!

Now this was meant to teach us not to rely on ourselves, but on God, Who raises the dead. (10) He rescued us from horrific deaths,^d and He will continue to rescue us.^e Yes, we have put our hope in Him! We believe He will rescue us again, (11) as you keep cooperating by helping us with your prayers. Then many people will give thanks on our^f behalf, because of the gracious deliverance we will experience in response to many prayers.

Paul's Reason for Boasting

(12) Here is our reason for boasting: Our consciences testify that we have conducted ourselves with God-given openness^g and sincerity—not with worldly wisdom, but with God's grace—in the world and especially in our relationship with you. (13) For we are not writing anything to you that you cannot read and understand. So I hope you will understand it completely, (14) just as you have already understood it in part. For we are your reason for boasting, just as you will

be ours on the day of our^h Lord Jesus.

Why Paul Changed His Travel Plans

(15) Now since I was confident of this, I was planning to make a preliminary visit to you, so you would have a double blessing.ⁱ (16) I wanted to pass through on my way to Macedonia^j and again on my way back, so you could send me on to Judea with your support. (17) When I made these plans, you don't really think I made them lightly, do you? Or are my plans so changeable that I first say "Yes" and then say "No?"

(18) As surely as God is faithful, our message to you has not been a combination of "Yes" and "No." (19) For God's Son, Jesus Christ, Whom Silas,^k Timothy, and I proclaimed among you was not a combination of "Yes" and "No." On the contrary, "Yes" has always been a reality in Him! (20) For all of God's promises are "Yes" in Christ! So whenever we praise God, we can say "Amen" through Him.

(21) Now in our union with Christ, God is making us stand firm along with you. He has anointed us (22) and stamped us with His seal. And in our hearts, He has given us the Spirit as a down payment that guarantees what is to come. (23) But I call on God as my witness that I stayed away from Corinth because I was trying to spare you. (24) I'm not suggesting that we should exercise control over your faith. No, we are working with you, to promote your joy, because you have been standing firm in the faith.

^a *Corinth* was a major city in southern Greece that was well-known for its sexual immorality. It was located on a land bridge (the Isthmus of Corinth) that connects the Greek mainland with the southern peninsula (the Peloponnesus). ^b *Achaia* was the Roman province that comprised classical Greece, and its capital was Corinth. ^c *Asia* was a Roman province that was located in what is now western Turkey. ^d Some manuscripts read *from a horrific death*. ^e Some manuscripts omit *and He will continue to rescue us*. ^f Some manuscripts read *your*. ^g Some manuscripts read *holiness*. ^h Some manuscripts read *the*. ⁱ Some manuscripts read *so you would have a double joy*. ^j *Macedonia* was a Roman province on the northern fringe of Greece. ^k Literally, *Silvanus*—*Silvanus* is the Roman form of the more familiar *Silas*.

CHAPTER 2

(1) So I decided that if my visit was going to bring you grief again, I would not come. (2) For if I bring you grief, who will be left to cheer me up but the very group of people I am grieving? (3) As a matter of fact, this was precisely why I wrote to you.^a I didn't want to come and be grieved by those who ought to make me happy. For I remain confident that what makes me happy makes all of you happy. (4) Let me be clear. I wrote to you out of great distress and anguish of heart, along with many tears—not to bring you grief, but to make you realize how much I love you.

Forgiveness for the Offender

(5) Now if anyone has been a source of grief, he hasn't grieved me. However, to some extent (I don't want to exaggerate), he has grieved all of you. (6) Nevertheless, the punishment that the majority of you have inflicted on him is severe enough. (7) So you must forgive him and encourage him, or he will be consumed by excessive grief. (8) And that is why I am urging you to officially affirm your love for him.^b

(9) I also wrote to you to find out if you would pass the test and be obedient in every way. (10) When you forgive someone, so do I. For what I have forgiven (if I have needed to forgive anything) has been forgiven in the presence of Christ and for your benefit. (11) I have done this to keep Satan from taking advantage of us. For we are well aware of his schemes!

The Fragrance of Knowing Christ

(12) Now when I arrived in Troas^c to proclaim the good news about Christ, I realized that the Lord had a door standing open for me. (13) But I had no peace of mind, because I couldn't find my brother Titus. So I said goodbye to the people there and went on into Macedonia.^d

(14) But thanks be to God! In our union with Christ, He always leads us in His victory parade, and through us, He continues to release the fragrance of knowing Christ in every place. (15) For in the sight of God, we are the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. (16) To some people, we are a deadly fragrance that kills, while to others, we are a vital fragrance that brings life.

But who is qualified to carry out these responsibilities? (17) At least we aren't corrupting God's word to make a profit, like so many people do.^e No, in our union with Christ, we continue to speak with sincerity—like people who are sent from God and are accountable to God.

^a Throughout this epistle, there are references to another letter that Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth. Expositors differ as to whether this was 1 Corinthians or an intermediate letter that is no longer extant. ^b Paul may be referring to the incestuous man mentioned in 1 Cor. 5 or to someone else who was creating problems for the Corinthian congregation. ^c *Troas* was an important port and a Roman colony on the eastern shore of the Aegean Sea. ^d *Macedonia* was a Roman province on the northern fringe of Greece. ^e Some manuscripts read *like the rest of the people do*.

CHAPTER 3

Ministers of a New Covenant

(1) Are we beginning to promote ourselves again? Or do we, like some people, need letters of recommendation to you or from you? Surely not! (2) Why you are our letter! For you have been written on our hearts, and you are recognized and read by everyone.^a (3) It is obvious that you are a letter from Christ that we have delivered. This letter was not written with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets that are made of stone, but on tablets that are human hearts.

(4) Now Christ gives us this kind of confidence in our communion with God. (5) We can't claim that any of our abilities originated with us. On the contrary, our abilities came from God. (6) He made us able ministers^b of a new covenant^c that finds its basis, not in the written code, but in the Spirit. For the written code kills, but the Spirit brings life.

The Glory of the New Covenant

(7) Now if the ministry that brought death (the one that was inscribed with letters in stone)^d was so glorious that the people of Israel could not gaze at the face of Moses because of its temporary glory,^e (8) won't the Spirit's ministry be even more glorious? (9) For if there was glory in the ministry that brought condemnation,^f the ministry that brings justification far surpasses it in glory! (10) In fact, the ministry that once was glorious has lost its glory because of the surpassing glory of what replaced it. (11) For if the ministry that was temporary came with glory, how much greater is the glory of the ministry that endures!

(12) Therefore, since we have this kind of hope, we are quite bold.^g (13) We are not like Moses, who veiled his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the final radiance of a temporary glory.^h (14) In any case, their minds were closed. As a matter of fact, up to this very day, the same veil is present when the old covenant is being read, and it is never lifted. For it is only removed in our union with Christ. (15) So even today, a veil covers the people's hearts whenever Moses is being read. (16) But whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.

(17) Now the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is present, there is freedom. (18) All of us reflect the Lord's glory with unveiled faces, and we are being transformed into His image with ever-increasing glory. This transformation finds its source in the Lord, Who is the Spirit.

^a The Greek term that has been translated *everyone* is gender inclusive. ^b Or *servants* ^c For the significance of the new covenant, see Jer. 31:31-34. ^d This is a reference to the ten commandments. ^e See Ex. 34:29-35. ^f Some manuscripts read *For if the ministry that brought condemnation had glory.* ^g Or *let us act with great boldness.* ^h The meaning of the Greek in the last part of verse 13 is uncertain.

CHAPTER 4

Proclaiming the Good News

(1) Therefore, since we have this ministry because of the mercy we were shown, we don't become discouraged. (2) But we have renounced secret and shameful ways. We don't practice trickery, nor do we distort God's word. On the contrary, by clearly revealing the truth, we seek the approval of every person's^a conscience, and we do this in the sight of God.

(3) Now even if our good news is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. (4) For the god of this age^b has blinded the minds of unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the radiance of the glorious good news about Christ, Who is the image of God.^c

(5) Instead of proclaiming ourselves, we are proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. (6) For the God Who said, "Let light shine out of darkness,"^d is the One Who illuminated our hearts with a radiance that comes from the recognition of divine glory in the face of Christ.^e

Treasure in Jars of Clay

(7) But we possess this treasure in jars of clay to prove that its extraordinary power comes from God and not from us. (8) We are oppressed on every side, but not hemmed in; perplexed, but not driven to despair; (9) persecuted, but not abandoned; knocked down, but not knocked out. (10) We are always bearing the dying of Jesus around with us in our bodies, and as a result, His life can be seen in our bodies. (11) For while we are living, we are constantly being handed over to death for Jesus' sake, and as a result, His life can be seen in our mortal nature. (12) So then, death is at work in us. But life is at work in you.

(13) Now since we have the same kind of faith as the person who wrote, "I

believed, and therefore I spoke,^f we also believe, and therefore we speak. (14) For we know that the One Who raised Jesus^g from the dead will also raise us with Jesus, and He will lead us into His presence along with you.

(15) Yes, all this is for your benefit. And as a result, the grace that is spreading to more and more people will make thanksgiving overflow to the glory of God.

(16) Therefore, we don't become discouraged. For even though our outward nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. (17) As a matter of fact, our light and momentary hardship is producing an eternal abundance of glory for us—a glory that is greater than anything we can imagine. (18) So we don't fix our attention on things that are seen, but on things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are temporary, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

^a The Greek term that has been translated *person's* is gender inclusive. ^b This is a reference to Satan. ^c Or *to keep the radiance of the glorious good news about Christ, Who is the image of God, from shining on them.* ^d Gen. 1:3 ^e Some manuscripts read *Jesus Christ*, while other manuscripts read *Christ Jesus*. ^f Ps. 116:10 (Septuagint) ^g Some manuscripts read *the Lord Jesus*.

CHAPTER 5

Earthly and Heavenly Dwellings

(1) If our earthly house (which is a tent) is dismantled, we are aware that we have a building from God—an eternal house in heaven that was not built by human hands. (2) And yes, while we are in this present dwelling, we continue to groan. For we long to be clothed^a with our heavenly dwelling. (3) Of course, after we have been clothed with it,^b we will not be naked spirits.^c (4) So while we are in this tent, we continue to groan with anxiety, because we don't want to lay it aside. Instead, we want to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that our mortality can be swallowed up by life.

(5) Now God has prepared us for this very thing, and He has given us the Spirit as a down payment on it. (6) So we are always confident. And yet we are aware that while we are at home in these bodies, we are away from the Lord. (7) For we live by faith, not by sight. (8) Yes, we are confident, and we would prefer to leave these bodies and make our home with the Lord. (9) But whether we are at home or away from home, it is our ambition to please Him. (10) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each person can receive what he deserves for his conduct in this life—whether it was good or bad.

Christ's Love Compels Us

(11) Now since we know what it means to be in awe of the Lord, we are trying to persuade people.^d God knows us for who we really are, and I hope you are also conscious of who we are. (12) We aren't trying to promote ourselves to you again. But we are giving you an opportunity to boast about us, so that you will have an answer for those who boast about outward appearances rather than sincerity of heart.

(13) If we were out of our minds, it was for God's sake, and if we are in our right minds, it is for your benefit. (14) For Christ's love compels us, because we have reached the conclusion that one Person died on behalf of all people, and therefore, all of them died.^e (15) Yes, Christ died on behalf of all people, so that those who are living would no longer live for themselves, but for the One Who died and rose on their behalf.

Be Reconciled to God

(16) So from now on, we don't estimate anyone by outward appearances. Even though we once estimated Christ by outward appearances, we no longer do that. (17) Therefore, if anyone is in union with Christ, he is a new creation. The old is gone; the new has come!

(18) All this is the work of God. He reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us this ministry that brings reconciliation. (19) For in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself—not counting the transgressions of its people against them. And He has entrusted us with the message of reconciliation.

(20) So then, we are ambassadors on behalf of Christ—since God is making His appeal through us. And on Christ's behalf, we are imploring you to be reconciled to God. (21) God made the One Who was unacquainted with sin become sin^f on our behalf, so that in union with Him, we could become God's righteousness.

^a The Greek word that has been translated *clothed* in verses 2 and 4 is slightly different from the Greek word that has been translated *clothed* in verse 3. The word that appears in verses 2 and 4 denotes putting on additional clothing over the clothes that are already being worn. Paul was thinking of Christ's second coming, when our mortal bodies will be clothed with immortality. For further details, see 1 Cor. 15:51-54. ^b Some manuscripts read *Of course, after we have laid aside this present tent.* ^c Literally, *we will not be found naked.* ^d The Greek term that has been translated *people* is gender inclusive.

^e When Christ died on the cross, the entire human race legally died in its Representative, and in this way, the penalty for human sin was paid in Christ. ^f Or a *sin offering*

CHAPTER 6

Now Is a Favorable Time!

(1) Now since we are working with God, we urge you not to let His grace be wasted on you. (2) For God says:

“At a favorable time, I listened to you,
and on a day of salvation, I helped you.”^a

See, now is a favorable time! Now is a day of salvation!

Paul’s Hardships

(3) We are trying to avoid giving anyone a reason to stumble, so that our ministry will not be discredited. (4) Instead, we are seeking your approval in every way, as God’s ministers should—with great endurance in the midst of hardships, needs, stresses, (5) beatings, imprisonments, social disorders, hard work, sleepless nights, and hunger, (6)—by innocent behavior, knowledge, patience, and kindness—with the Holy Spirit, genuine love, (7) truthful speech, and divine power. We are wielding weapons of righteousness in our right and left hands, (8) through glory and dishonor, slander and praise. We are regarded as deceivers; yet we are true; (9) as unknown, yet we are famous; as dying, yet we continue to live; as punished,^b yet we are not put to death; (10) as grieving, yet we are always rejoicing; as destitute, yet we are making many people rich, and as having nothing, yet we own everything.

(11) We have spoken freely to you Corinthians, and our hearts are open wide. (12) You are not being crowded out of our affection, but we are being crowded out of yours. (13) So, as a fair exchange (I am speaking like I would to children), open your hearts wide!

Relationships with Unbelievers

(14) Don’t be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For how can righteousness and lawlessness be partners? What fellowship does light have with darkness? (15) How can Christ agree with Satan?^c What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? (16) How can God’s sanctuary be united with idols? Yes, we are the sanctuary of the living God. As God put it:

“I will live and walk among them.
I will be their God,
and they will be My people.”^d

(17) “‘So come out from them,
and be separate,’ says the Lord.
‘Do not touch anything that is unclean,
and I will welcome you.’^c
(18) I will be your Father,
and you will be My sons and daughters,’
says the Lord almighty.”^f

^a Isa. 49:8 (Septuagint) ^b Paul probably had a Roman scourging in mind, which often preceded execution. ^c Literally, *Beliar*—Beliar (or Belial) is a Hebrew term that means “worthless,” and it eventually became a name for Satan. ^d Lev. 26:12; Ezek. 37:27 ^e Isa. 52:11; Ezek. 20:34, 41 ^f 2 Sam. 7:14

CHAPTER 7

(1) Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that defiles body and spirit by making our holiness complete out of reverence for God.

Paul's Joy

(2) Make room for us in your hearts. We haven't wronged anyone, nor have we ruined or cheated anyone. (3) I'm not saying this to condemn you. For I have said before that whether we die together or continue to live together, you are in our hearts. (4) I am speaking to you with great candor, and my reasons for boasting about you are just as great. In the midst of all our distress, I am filled with encouragement, and my joy overflows!

(5) For even when we arrived in Macedonia,^a we had no peace. Instead, we were being hassled at every turn by outward quarrels and inward fears. (6) But the God Who encourages those who are depressed encouraged us by the arrival of Titus.^b (7) We were encouraged not only by his arrival, but also by the encouragement you gave him. And as he was giving us a report about your longing for me, your deep sorrow, and the commitment you have for me, my joy was greater than ever.

(8) So even if I grieved you with that letter,^c I don't regret it. Although I did regret it at first (for I could see that the letter grieved you, though only for a while), (9) I am happy now. I'm not happy because you were grieved, but because your grief led you to repentance. For since you experienced a godly grief, we caused you no harm. (10) Yes, godly grief produces repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regrets. But worldly grief produces death.

(11) Think about the many changes that this godly grief produced in you! Such eagerness to clear yourselves, such indignation, such fear, such longing, such

zeal, such readiness to punish evil! In every way, you have demonstrated that you have pure motives in this affair. (12) And even though I wrote you that letter, I didn't write it because of the person who did wrong or the person who was hurt.^d No, I wrote it to make you aware of how committed you are to us in the sight of God.

(13) So this is why we have been encouraged. And along with the encouragement you gave us, we were especially delighted to see how happy Titus was, because his mind has been put at ease by all of you. (14) I had boasted to him about you, and you did not embarrass me. On the contrary, just as everything we told you was true, so our boasting to Titus also turned out to be true. (15) His affection for you keeps growing stronger as he remembers how obedient all of you were and how you welcomed him with fear and trembling. (16) So I am glad that I can have complete confidence in you.

^a *Macedonia* was a Roman province on the northern fringe of Greece. ^b It seems that Titus had visited the Corinthian believers to assist them in dealing with their problems. ^c Throughout this epistle, there are references to another letter that Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth. There is a difference of opinion as to whether this was 1 Corinthians or an intermediate letter that is no longer extant. ^d Paul may be referring to the incestuous man mentioned in 1 Cor. 5 or to someone else who was creating problems in the Corinthian congregation. If the offender in 1 Cor. 5 is in view, the person who was hurt was probably the husband of the woman who was involved in the incest.

CHAPTER 8

A Call to Generous Giving

(1) Brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given to the churches in Macedonia.^a (2) For during a severe trial that involved hardship, their boundless joy and deep poverty overflowed in a wealth of generosity. (3) I can testify that of their own free will, they gave to the utmost of their ability and even beyond their ability. (4) With much pleading, they begged us for the gracious privilege of participating in this ministry to God's holy people.^b (5) And they did more than we had hoped. In keeping with God's will, they dedicated themselves first to the Lord and then to us.

(6) Now their example led us to encourage Titus to complete this ministry of giving among you in the same way that he started it. (7) Yes, just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in every kind of enthusiasm, and in our love for you^c—make sure that you also excel in this gracious ministry.

(8) I'm not giving you a command. But I am using the enthusiasm of others to determine how genuine your love is. (9) For you know how gracious our Lord Jesus Christ was. Although He was rich, yet for you He became poor, so that through His poverty, you could become rich.

(10) I am giving you advice about this matter because it will be helpful to you. You were off to a good start last year both in what you did and in your willingness to do it. (11) Now finish the job! Then your eager willingness will be matched by your ability to complete it with the means that you have. (12) For if the eagerness is there, the gift will be accepted on the basis of what you have, not on the basis of what you don't have.

(13) I'm not saying that other people should get relief while you face hardship. No, this is a question of fairness. (14) Right now, your abundance will meet their need, so that eventually, their abundance can also meet your need. Then everything will balance out. (15) As it is written:

“The person who had a lot
did not have too much.
And the person who had a little
did not have too little.”^d

Paul Sends His Partners to Corinth

(16) But thanks be to God, Who has given Titus the same enthusiasm for you that I have. (17) For Titus welcomed my request, and of his own free will, he is eagerly setting out to visit you.

(18) Now along with Titus, we are sending the brother^e who is praised in all the churches for proclaiming the good news. (19) What is more, this brother was chosen by the churches to be our traveling companion as we handle the delivery of this gracious gift, which will bring glory to the Lord^f and demonstrate our goodwill. (20) We are trying to avoid any criticism of the way we are handling this large sum of money. (21) For we intend to do what is right, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of human beings.^g

(22) In addition, we are sending our own brother^h with them. Frequent testing in many situations has proven that he is eager to help, and at the present time, he is more eager than ever because he has great confidence in you.

(23) Now if there is any question about Titus, be aware that he is my partner and fellow worker among you. And if there is any question about our other brothers, be aware that they were sent out by the churches and are bringing glory to Christ. (24) So before the churches, you must demonstrate that you love them and that we were right when we boasted to them about you.

^a *Macedonia* was a Roman province on the northern fringe of Greece. ^b It seems that Paul was promoting a special offering for needy Christians in Jerusalem. ^c Some manuscripts read *your love for us*. ^d Ex. 16:18 ^e The identity of this brother remains uncertain, although some expositors have suggested that Paul had Luke in mind. ^f Some manuscripts read *the Lord Himself*. ^g The Greek term that has been translated *human beings* is gender inclusive. ^h The identity of this brother remains uncertain.

CHAPTER 9

Instructions about Giving

(1) It is quite unnecessary for me to write to you about this ministry to God’s holy people. (2) For I am aware of how eager you are to help, and I keep boasting about it to the Macedonians.^a I have told them that Achaia^b has been ready to contribute since last year, and your enthusiasm has spurred most of them to action. (3) But I am sending the brothers^c to make sure that our boasting about you in this matter does not prove to be empty bluster, and to see to it that you are ready, just as I was telling them. (4) For if any Macedonians come with me and find that you are unprepared to contribute, we (not to mention you) will be humiliated by this whole project. (5) So I thought it was necessary to encourage the brothers to visit you in advance and complete the arrangements for this bountiful gift you have promised. Then it will be ready when I arrive, and it will really be a bountiful gift and not an extortion.

(6) Remember that the person who sows sparingly will reap a sparse harvest, but the person who sows bountifully will reap a bountiful harvest. (7) Each person should give what he has decided in his mind to give—not grudgingly or under compulsion. For God loves a cheerful giver. (8) And God has the power to make all of His grace overflow on you. Then you will always have enough of everything, and you will abound in every good work. (9) As it is written:

“He scattered His gifts to the poor;
His righteousness endures forever.”^d

(10) So the One Who provides seed for sowing and bread for eating will also provide you with a supply of seed. He will multiply it and enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. (11) For you are being enriched in every way—so that you can be generous on all occasions. And through our charitable work,^e your generosity will bring thanksgiving to God.

(12) Now the ministry that you are performing in service to others is not only supplying the needs of God’s holy people, but it is also overflowing in many

expressions of thanks to God. (13) And because of this ministry by which you have proved yourselves, people are praising God for your submission in confessing the good news about Christ and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. (14) In fact, their hearts go out to you as they offer prayers on your behalf. For they see the extraordinary grace that God has given you. (15) Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

^a*Macedonia* was a Roman province on the northern fringe of Greece. ^b*Achaia* was the Roman province that comprised classical Greece, and its capital was Corinth. ^c See 2 Cor. 8:16-24. ^d Ps. 112:9 (Septuagint) ^e Literally, *through us*,

CHAPTER 10

Paul Defends His Ministry

(1) I am imploring you personally with the gentleness and mildness of Christ. I am the same Paul who is timid when I am face to face with you, but bold when I am away.^a (2) Nevertheless, when I arrive, I beg you to spare me from the need to act boldly and confidently by daring to oppose those who think that we are living by human standards. (3) For even though we are living as human beings, we are not waging war the way human beings do. (4) In fact, the weapons we fight with are not those of humanity. On the contrary, our weapons utilize God's power to demolish strongholds. We keep tearing down false arguments (5) and every proud obstacle that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. We are bringing every thought into captivity—to make it obey Christ. (6) And when your obedience is complete, we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience.

(7) Look at the facts that are staring you in the face.^b If anyone is confident that he belongs to Christ, he should remind himself again that we belong to Christ just as much as he does. (8) So even if I am boasting a little too freely about our authority (which the Lord gave us to build you up and not to tear you down), I am not ashamed of it.

(9) Now I don't want to come across as if I'm trying to terrify you with my letters. (10) For someone is probably saying, "His letters are weighty and powerful, but his physical presence is weak, and his speech is beneath contempt." (11) Such a person needs to reckon with the fact that what we say in our letters when we are away from you is exactly what we will do when we are with you.

Paul's Reason for Boasting

(12) We don't have the audacity to classify or compare ourselves with some of those people who are promoting themselves. However, when they measure

themselves by their own standards and compare themselves with one another, they are not using good judgment.

(13) But we will not give way to excessive boasting. Instead, we will confine our boasting to the sphere of duty that God marked out for us, and that sphere of duty extends even to you. (14) We are not going too far in our boasting, as would be the case if we had not come to visit you. After all, we were the first messengers to reach you with the good news about Christ.

(15) What is more, we will not give way to excessive boasting about the hard work of others either. But we hope that as your faith continues to grow, your esteem for our ministry among you will be greater than ever. And yet you need to show respect for our sphere of duty—(16) so we can preach the good news in the regions beyond you. For we don't want to boast about work that has already been done by someone else.^c

(17) Now “the person who boasts must boast about the Lord.”^d (18) For the person who promotes himself is not the one who is approved. No, the person the Lord promotes receives approval.

^aThis is probably something that Paul's enemies were saying about him. ^bOr *You are looking at the facts that are staring you in the face.* Or *Are you looking at the facts that are staring you in the face?* ^cThe meaning of the Greek in verses 13-16 is uncertain. ^dJer. 9:24

CHAPTER 11

Paul and the False Apostles

(1) I hope you will put up with a little foolishness from me. Yes, do put up with me!^a (2) For I am jealous of you, with a jealousy that comes from God. After all, I personally arranged your engagement to one Husband, and I intend to present you to Christ as a pure virgin. (3) But I am afraid that just as the snake deceived Eve with his trickery, so your minds may be lured away from the simplicity and purity that are in Christ.^b (4) For when someone comes along and proclaims a different Jesus than the Jesus we proclaimed, or when you receive a different spirit than the Spirit you received, or a different kind of “good news” than the good news you accepted, you put up with it well enough.

(5) I don't regard myself as inferior in any way to those super-apostles. (6) For even if I am unskilled in public speaking, at least I have knowledge. And we have certainly made that clear to you in every possible way. (7) Did I commit a sin when I humbled myself to lift you up by proclaiming God's good news to you

free of charge? (8) I looted other churches by accepting support from them so that I could serve you. (9) And when I was with you and lacked provisions, I was not a burden to anyone. For the brothers who came from Macedonia^c fully supplied my needs. Yes, I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and I will continue to do so.

(10) As surely as the truth about Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be silenced in the regions of Achaia.^d (11) Why am I saying this? Is it because I don't love you? God knows I do! (12) But I will continue to do what I am doing to eliminate any opportunity for those who desire a pretext to be considered equal with us in the work they are boasting about. (13) Such people are false apostles and deceitful workers who are masquerading as apostles of Christ. (14) And no wonder! For Satan himself keeps masquerading as an angel of light. (15) So it is no great surprise if his servants are also masquerading as ministers of righteousness. But in the end, they will receive what their deeds deserve.

Paul Boasts about His Suffering

(16) I will say it again. No one should take me for a fool. But if you do, then welcome me as a fool, so I can do a little boasting. (17) Of course, when it comes to this matter of boasting, I am not speaking with the Lord's authority. I am speaking like a fool! (18) But since many people boast for merely human reasons, I'll do it too! (19) After all, you gladly put up with fools—since you're so wise! (20) In fact, you put up with anyone who enslaves you, preys on you, grabs you, treats you arrogantly, or punches you in the face. (21) I am ashamed to admit that we have been weaklings in comparison!

But whatever anyone else dares to claim—I am talking foolishness here—I can claim it also. (22) Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelis? So am I. Are they Abraham's descendants?^e So am I. (23) Are they Christ's ministers? I'm out of my mind to talk like this, but I'm a better one! I have worked harder. I have been in prison more frequently. I have endured far worse beatings. And I have often faced death.

(24) Five times I received the 39 lashes from the Jews. (25) Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned.^f Three times I was shipwrecked.^g And I was adrift in the open sea for a night and a day. (26) In my frequent travels, I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from robbers, in danger from my own people, in danger from Gentiles, in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea, and in danger from false brothers. (27) I have toiled and struggled and have often endured sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have been cold and naked. (28) And besides these external trials, I face daily stress because of my concern for all the churches. (29) Who is weak without me being weak? Who causes another person to stumble in his faith without me being fired with emotion?

(30) But since boasting is necessary,^h I will boast about the things that demonstrate

my weakness. (31) The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, Who is praised forever, knows I am telling the truth. (32) In Damascus, the governor under King Aretasⁱ was guarding the city of the Damascenes, so he could arrest me. (33) But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the city wall and escaped his clutches.^j

^a Or *But you are actually doing that!* ^b Or *from sincere and pure devotion to Christ*. Some manuscripts read *from the simplicity that is in Christ* (or *from sincere devotion to Christ*). ^c Macedonia was a Roman province on the northern fringe of Greece. ^d Achaia was the Roman province that comprised classical Greece, and its capital was Corinth. ^e Literally, *seed?* ^f See Acts 14:19-20. ^g These shipwrecks occurred before the one that is described in Acts 27:27-44. ^h This may have been a frequent expression in the Corinthian church. ⁱ Aretas IV reigned over the Nabatean kingdom (which was centered at Petra) from 9 B.C. to A.D. 40. It seems that the Romans had given Aretas jurisdiction over Damascus, but the identity of the governor remains unknown. ^j See Acts 9:23-25.

CHAPTER 12

Snatched Away to the Third Heaven

(1) Boasting is necessary!^a So even though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will move on to visions and revelations from the Lord. (2) I know a person^b who is in union with Christ, and 14 years ago, that person was snatched away to the third heaven.^c Whether this occurred in his body or out of his body, I don't know; God knows. (3) But I do know that this person—whether in his body or apart from his body, I don't know; God knows—(4) was snatched away to paradise, where he heard things that are too holy to be expressed in words—things that no human being is allowed to mention.

(5) Now I'm ready to boast about a person like that, but I won't boast about myself—except about my weaknesses. (6) And yet if I do choose to boast, I won't be a fool, because I'll be telling the truth. But I'm trying to refrain from that kind of boasting, so no one will think more highly of me than is warranted by my words and actions that he can hear and see.

Paul's Thorn

(7) Now to keep me from becoming arrogant because of the extraordinary nature of these revelations, I received a thorn in my flesh.^d This thorn is a messenger from Satan that constantly punches me and keeps me from becoming arrogant.^e (8) I begged the Lord three times to take it away from me, (9) but He has always told me, "My grace is sufficient for you. For My^f power achieves its goal in weakness." So I will gladly boast about my weaknesses—in order to have Christ's

power as a shelter over me. (10) This is why, for Christ's sake, I take pleasure in weaknesses, insults, needs, persecutions, and stresses. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Paul's Concern for the Corinthians

(11) I have become a fool! You drove me to it, because my credentials should have been promoted by you. For even though I am nothing, I don't fall short in any way when compared with those super-apostles. (12) Yes, the tokens that mark me as an apostle were performed among you with great patience—signs, wonders, and miracles. (13) How were you treated worse than the other churches, except for the fact that I was not a burden to you? Forgive me for this wrong!

(14) Look, I am ready to visit you for the third time. And I won't be a burden to you, because I don't want your possessions. No, I want you! After all, children should not have to save up money for their parents, but parents for their children.

(15) So I will gladly spend my money and myself on your behalf. But if I love you so much, will you love me less?

(16) However, since you agree that I did not burden you, I must have been a crafty fellow who took you in with deceit! (17) And yet I never used the messengers I sent you to cheat you, did I? (18) I urged Titus to visit you, and I sent our brother^e with him. But Titus didn't cheat you, did he? Didn't we both conduct ourselves in the same spirit and walk in the same tracks?

(19) You have been thinking all along that we are trying to defend ourselves before you.^h But in our union with Christ, we have been speaking before God, and everything we do, dear friends, is meant to build you up. (20) I am afraid that when I come, I may not find you like I want you to be, and you may not find me like you want me to be. I fear that there will be quarreling, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance, and general disorder. (21) I am afraid that when I come, my God may humble me before you again, and I may be grieved over many who have persisted in their former sins and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and lewd conduct that they practiced.

^a This may have been a frequent expression in the Corinthian church. ^b The Greek term that has been translated *person/human being* in verses 2, 3, and 4 is gender inclusive. ^c Paul was probably thinking of the earth's atmosphere as the first heaven, the realm of the stars as the second heaven, and God's realm or paradise as the third heaven. ^d Paul's reference to his *flesh* indicates that this *thorn* was almost certainly a physical ailment. Inasmuch as Acts 9:8-9, 12, 17-18, Gal. 4:15, and possibly Gal. 6:11 refer to problems with Paul's eyes, some expositors have suggested that poor eyesight was the thorn in his flesh. ^e Some manuscripts omit *and keeps me from becoming arrogant*. ^f Although the better manuscripts omit *My*, this pronoun is strongly implied by the context. ^g The identity of this brother remains uncertain, although some expositors have suggested that Paul had Luke in mind. ^h Or *Have you been thinking all along that we are trying to defend ourselves before you?*

CHAPTER 13

Final Warnings

(1) This is the third time I am coming to visit you. “Every fact must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”^a (2) When I was with you the second time, I issued a warning to those who have persisted in their former sins and to everyone else, and now I am repeating that warning while I am absent: When I return, I will not spare you—(3) since you are looking for proof that Christ is speaking through me. He is not weak in dealing with you. On the contrary, He is making His power felt among you. (4) For He was crucified in weakness, but now He is living because of God’s power. And in our union with Him, we are weak,^b but because of the power that God has revealed to you, we will live with Him.^c

(5) So keep examining yourselves to find out if you are in the faith. Put yourselves to the test! Don’t you realize that Jesus Christ is among^d you—unless, of course, you have failed the test? (6) And I hope you will realize that we have not failed the test. (7) We are praying to God that you won’t do anything wrong—not to prove that we have passed the test, but because we want you to do what is right, even though we may seem like failures. (8) For we can’t do anything against the truth, but only on behalf of the truth. (9) Yes, we are happy when we are weak and you are strong. And we are praying for your revival.

(10) Now I am writing these things while I am away from you so that when I arrive, I won’t need to be severe in using the authority the Lord gave me to build you up and not to tear you down.

Final Greetings

(11) Finally, brothers, keep rejoicing.^e Continue to aim for revival.^f Always pay attention to my appeals.^g Make it your practice to agree with one another and to live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. (12) Be sure to greet one another with a holy kiss. (13) All of God’s holy people send their greetings. (14) May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

^a Deut. 19:15 ^b Some manuscripts read *And we are weak with Him.* ^c Or *because of God’s power, we will live with Him and for you.* Some manuscripts simply read *because of God’s power, we will live with Him.* ^d Or *in* ^e Or *Finally, brothers, goodbye.* ^f Or *Continue to mend your ways.* ^g Or *Always be encouraged.*

STUDY GUIDE

(1) What was the distress that Paul experienced in Asia? Do you think he was referring to the riot that occurred in Ephesus or to something else?

(Acts 19:23-41; 2 Cor. 1:8-11)

(2) Paul instructed the Corinthian Christians to forgive a particular person. Do you think Paul was referring to the man who committed incest or to someone else? What can we learn from Paul's instruction about the importance of forgiving people who have sinned? *(1 Cor. 5:1-5; 2 Cor. 2:5-8)*

(3) Did Paul regard the ten commandments as temporary? Or did he regard the old covenant (of which the ten commandments were a part) as temporary?

(Rom. 3:31; 2 Cor. 3:7-11)

(4) Is the Holy Spirit God? *(Acts 5:3-4; 2 Cor. 3:17-18)*

(5) Did Paul expect to be with Christ at the moment he died or at the resurrection? *(2 Cor. 5:1-10; Phil. 1:21-24)*

(6) When we are united to Christ by faith, how perfect is our standing before God? *(2 Cor. 5:21)*

(7) When is the best time to accept Christ as Savior? *(2 Cor. 6:2)*

(8) How can we be unequally yoked with unbelievers? *(2 Cor. 6:14-18)*

(9) Why do you think Paul's tone seems harsher in 2 Cor. 10-13 than in the earlier chapters of this epistle?

(10) What are the weapons that Christians fight with, and how can we use them to tear down strongholds, false arguments, and proud obstacles? *(2 Cor. 10:3-5)*

(11) Why did Paul boast so much? *(2 Cor. 11:10-12:6)*

(12) What do you think Paul meant when he spoke of a thorn in his flesh? *(2 Cor. 12:7-10)*

(13) How can we examine ourselves to find out if we are in the faith? *(2 Cor. 13:5)*

Galatians

CHAPTER 1

Greetings from Paul

(1) From Paul (an apostle whose call did not come from human beings^a or through any earthly person, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, Who raised Him from the dead), (2) and from all the brothers who are with me.

To the churches in Galatia.^b (3) May you have grace and peace from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.^c (4) In agreement with the will of our God and Father, Christ gave Himself for our sins—to rescue us from this present evil age. (5) To Him be glory forever and ever! Amen.

Different Kinds of “Good News”

(6) I am amazed that you are turning away so quickly from the One Who called you by grace,^d to follow a different kind of “good news.” (7) Not that there really is another kind, but there are some people who are causing you trouble and who want to distort the good news about Christ. (8) But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim a kind of “good news”^e that is contrary to the good news we already proclaimed to you, let him be eternally condemned! (9) I am repeating what we have said before: If anyone is proclaiming “good news” to you that is contrary to what you received, let Him be eternally condemned!

(10) Am I looking for human approval or for God’s approval at the present time? Or to put it another way, am I trying to be a people pleaser? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

The Good News Was Revealed to Paul

(11) Now^f brothers, I want you to realize that the good news I proclaimed is not a human invention. (12) For I did not receive it from a human being, nor was I taught it. On the contrary, I received it through a revelation from Jesus Christ.^g (13) For you have heard about my former way of life in Judaism. I used to persecute God’s church with a fanatical passion, and I was trying to exterminate it. (14) Yes, I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews who were my own age, and I was extremely zealous for the traditions of my ancestors.^h

(15) But when the Oneⁱ Who had set me apart before I was born and had called me by His grace was pleased (16) to reveal His Son to me and to have me proclaim Him among the Gentiles, I did not consult anyone.^j (17) Nor did I go up to Jerusalem to meet with those who were apostles before me. Instead, I went off at once to Arabia^k and later came back to Damascus.

(18) Now after three years, I did go up to Jerusalem to get information from

Peter,^l and I stayed with him for two weeks. (19) But I did not see any of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. (20) I assure you before God that what I am writing is not a lie!

(21) Later, I went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia.^m (22) However, the Christian churches in Judea remained unacquainted with me personally. (23) The only thing they kept hearing was the report that their former persecutor was now proclaiming the faith he had once tried to exterminate.

(24) And they kept praising God for what had happened to me.

^a The Greek term that has been translated *human being(s)*, *human*, *earthly person*, or *people* in verses 1, 10, 11, and 12 is gender inclusive. ^b It is uncertain whether Paul is referring to the region of Galatia or the Roman province of Galatia. The Roman province included the region, which was located in central Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), plus additional territory to the south. ^c Some manuscripts read *May you have grace and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ*. ^d Some manuscripts read *by the grace of Christ*. ^e Some manuscripts insert the phrase *to you here*. ^f Some manuscripts read *For*. ^g Or *about Jesus Christ*. ^h Or *fathers*. ⁱ Some manuscripts read *But when God*. ^j Literally, *I did not consult flesh and blood*. ^k Paul is probably referring to the lightly settled region to the east of Damascus, rather than the Arabian Peninsula far to the south. ^l Literally, *Cephas*—Cephas (Aramaic) and Peter (Greek) both mean *rock*. ^m *Cilicia* was a Roman province in southeastern Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey).

CHAPTER 2

The Right Hand of Fellowship

(1) Now after 14 years had passed, I went up to Jerusalem again—this time with Barnabas, and Titus also came along. (2) I went there in response to a revelation, and in a private meeting with those who were recognized as leaders, I presented the good news that I proclaim among the Gentiles. I did this to make sure that the race I was running and had run in the past counted for something. (3) But even though my companion Titus was a Greek, no one forced him to be circumcised. (4) That question only came up because some false brothers had secretly infiltrated our ranks, to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves.

(5) But because we wanted the truth about the good news to be preserved for you, we didn't give in to them for a moment. (6) And as for those who enjoyed special recognition, they added nothing to my message. Not that their status matters to me. For God does not recognize such distinctions. (7) But they saw that I had been given the responsibility of taking the good news to the Gentiles,^a just as

Peter had been given the responsibility of taking it to the Jews.^b (8) For the One Who empowered Peter by making him an apostle to the Jews also empowered me by sending me to the Gentiles.

(9) Now as soon as James,^c Peter,^d and John (who were considered pillars of the church) recognized the special grace that had been given to me, they gave Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship, with the understanding that we would go to Gentiles and they to the Jews. (10) All they asked was that we continue to remember the poor, which was the very thing that I was eager to do.

Paul Confronts Peter

(11) However, when Peter came to Antioch,^e I confronted him to his face, because he was totally wrong. (12) For he had made it his practice to eat with the Gentiles before some messengers came from James. But after they arrived, he began drawing back and refusing to associate with the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who insisted on circumcision. (13) And the rest of the Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray.

(14) Now when I saw that their conduct was inconsistent with the truth about the good news, I said to Peter in front of everyone, “Even though you are a Jew, you are living like a Gentile and not like a Jew. So why are you trying to make the Gentiles live like Jews? (15) Although we are Jews by birth and not Gentile ‘sinners,’ (16) we are aware that no one^f is justified^g by doing what the law requires, but by believing in Jesus Christ. And we have believed in Christ Jesus so that we could be justified by faith in Him and not by doing what the law requires. For no one will be justified by doing what the law requires!

(17) But if we who are trying to be justified by Christ are still sinners, does this mean that Christ promotes sin? That would be unthinkable! (18) As a matter of fact, if I rebuild the system I tore down, I prove that I am a lawbreaker. (19) For through law, I died to law—so that I could live for God!^h

(20) I have been crucified with Christ, and I am no longer living, but Christ is living in me. So the life I am now living in my body, I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me. (21) I am not rejecting God’s grace. For if justification comes through law, Christ died for nothing.”ⁱ

^a Literally, *the uncircumcised*, ^b Literally, *the circumcised*—see also verses 8 and 9. ^c This was Jesus’ brother James. See also verse 12. ^d Literally, *Cephas*—see also verses 11 and 14. Cephas (Aramaic) and Peter (Greek) both mean *rock*. ^e Two cities named *Antioch* are mentioned in the New Testament. One was located in Syria, and the other in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). This reference is almost certainly to Syrian Antioch. ^f The Greek term that has been translated *no one* is gender inclusive. ^g In the Pauline epistles, the term *justification* always means *to declare righteous*. When God justifies those who have faith in Christ, He is acting as their Judge and giving them an innocent verdict. Although they are sinners, Christ’s righteousness stands in place of their unrighteousness, and God treats them as if they are perfect. But when unbelievers try to obtain God’s justification

by doing what the law requires, they utterly fail and are condemned by their Judge because they never keep His law perfectly.^h Although verses 17-19 are difficult to understand, the following explanation seems probable: Paul is affirming the fact that Gentiles are not the only sinners; he and his fellow Jews are also sinners. In other words, all human beings are sinners, and they need the justification that Christ provides. However, when Paul maintained that Christ justifies sinners (declares sinners righteous), his opponents accused him of claiming that Christ promotes sin. But for Paul, this was unthinkable. Although justification by faith is God's remedy for sin, it is not an excuse for sin. On the contrary, Paul would actually prove that he was a lawbreaker if he returned to his former belief that he could find salvation by doing what the law requires. When Paul pondered the far-reaching requirements of the law, he realized that he could never perfectly obey it. In the sight of God, he would always be a lawbreaker. Consequently, he died to law as a method of salvation, so that he could live for God by trusting in the justifying righteousness of Jesus Christ.ⁱ Some expositors would end the quotation after verse 14.

CHAPTER 3

Who Put a Spell on You?

(1) You foolish Galatians! Who put a spell on you? Why you had the crucifixion of Jesus Christ placarded before your eyes! (2) The one thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing what the law requires or by believing what you heard?

(3) How can you be so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you trying to finish with human effort? (4) Did you suffer so much for nothing? Perhaps even "for nothing" is not strong enough terminology! (5) Does God give you the Spirit and work miracles among you because you do what the law requires or because you believe what you heard?

(6) Consider the example of Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."^a (7) You must realize, then, that those who have faith are Abraham's descendants.^b (8) And since scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, it proclaimed the good news to Abraham ahead of time when it said, "All the nations^c will be blessed through you."^d (9) So then, those who have faith are being blessed along with faithful Abraham.

(10) On the other hand, all who rely on doing what the law requires are under a curse. For it is written: "There is a curse on everyone who does not persist in doing all the things that are written in the book of the law!"^e (11) It is obvious that no one is justified by law in the sight of God. For "the person who is righteous by faith will live."^f (12) But the law has nothing to do with faith. On the contrary, it

says that “the person who does these things will find life in them.”^g

(13) Now Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse on our behalf. For it is written: “There is a curse on everyone who is hung on a tree!”^h (14) And by this means, Abraham’s blessing could be extended to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, and by faith, we could receive the Spirit Who had been promised.

The Law and the Covenant

(15) Brothers, let me share an example from human affairs. When people ratify a covenant, no one can cancel it or add anything to it. (16) Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his Descendant.ⁱ The scripture doesn’t say “descendants,”^j meaning many people, but “your Descendant,” meaning one Person, Who is Christ.

(17) This is what I am saying: The covenant with Abraham^k had already been ratified by God, and a law that came into being 430 years later could never undermine it or cancel its promise. (18) For if the inheritance is based on law, then it is not based on a promise. But by His grace, God gave it to Abraham through a promise.

The Purpose of the Law

(19) So why was the law given? It was added to point out transgressions until the arrival of the Descendant to Whom the promise referred. And the law was put into effect through angels, by means of a mediator.^l (20) But no mediator is needed when only one person makes a promise, and that one Person is God.

(21) So is the law opposed to the promises?^m That would be unthinkable! For if a law had been given that could grant life, righteousness would certainly come through law. (22) But scripture declares that the entire world is locked in the dungeon of sin, and as a result, believers can only receive the promise through faith in Jesus Christ.

(23) Now before faith came on the scene, we were being guarded and held in custody by law—until faith, which was about to come, could be revealed. (24) For the law had become our chaperone to lead us to Christ,ⁿ so that we could be justified by faith. (25) But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a chaperone.

Equality in Christ

(26) Yes, you are all God’s children through faith in Christ Jesus. (27) For all of you who were baptized into union with Christ Jesus have been clothed with Christ. (28) So there is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There is neither male nor female. For in your union with Christ Jesus, you are all one. (29) And if you belong to Christ, you are Abraham’s descendants and heirs

of the promise.

Gen. 15:6 ^b Or *sons*. ^c Or *All the Gentiles* ^d Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18 ^e Deut. 27:26 ^f Hab. 2:4 ^g Lev. 18:5 ^h Deut. 21:23 ⁱ Literally, *Seed*—this word appears again in verse 16 and also in verse 19. ^j Literally, “*seeds*,” ^k Although the words *with Abraham* do not appear in the original text, they have been added for clarification. ^l According to Jewish tradition, the law was given to Moses (the mediator) through angels. ^m Some manuscripts read *God’s promises?*. ⁿ Or *For the law had become our chaperone until Christ came*,

CHAPTER 4

God’s Children

(1) This is what I am saying: As long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, even though he owns all the property. (2) He is under the supervision of guardians and trustees until the date set by his father. (3) And it was the same with us. When we were children, we were enslaved by worldly principles.^a (4) But when the right time came, God sent His Son. He was born of a woman and born under law,^b (5) to redeem those who were under law, so that we could be adopted as His children. (6) And because you are His children, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our^c hearts—the Spirit Who cries, “Abba!^d Father!”

(7) So you are no longer a slave; you are a child! And since you are a child, God has also made you an heir.

Paul’s Concern for the Galatians

(8) In the past, when you did not know God, you were enslaved by things that are not gods at all. (9) But now that you do know God, or rather, are known by God, why are you turning back to those weak and bankrupt principles? Do you want to be enslaved by them all over again? (10) You are observing days and months and seasons and years. (11) I am afraid for you. Could it be that I have wasted my efforts on you?

(12) I beg you, brothers, become like me. After all, I became like you. You never did me any wrong. (13) As you are aware, it was because of a physical illness that I first proclaimed the good news to you. (14) And even though my bodily condition was a trial to you, you did not despise me or spit me out. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel from God or Christ Jesus Himself.

(15) What has happened to the joy you felt? I can testify that if it had been possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me. (16) So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?

(17) Those false teachers are determined to win you over, but their motives are not good. They want to put an end to our fellowship—so you will be devoted to them. (18) Now it is nice to be the object of such devotion, provided it is for good motives. And that is true at all times, not just when I am with you.

(19) O my children, once again I am undergoing birth pains until Christ is formed in you! (20) How I wish I could be with you now and change my way of speaking. For I am baffled by you!

An Allegory about Hagar and Sarah

(21) Tell me, you who want to be under law—are you really listening to what the law says? (22) For it is written that Abraham had two sons—one by a slave woman and the other by a free woman. (23) The slave woman’s son was born in the usual way, but the free woman’s son was the result of a promise.

(24) Now this story can be taken as an allegory, in which these women symbolize two covenants. One of the covenants came to us from Mount Sinai. Its children are born into slavery, and it is symbolized by Hagar. (25) Yes, Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia,^c which represents the present-day city of Jerusalem. For she and her children live in slavery. (26) But the heavenly Jerusalem is free, and she is our mother.^f

(27) As it is written:

“Be glad, O childless woman,
who cannot give birth.
Burst into cries of joy,
you who feel no birth pains.
For the children of the deserted woman
are more numerous than the children
of the woman who has a husband.”^g

(28) So, brothers, you^h are children of the promise, just as Isaac was. (29) At that time, the son who was born in the usual way persecuted the son who was born by the power of the Spirit. And the same thing is happening now. (30) But what does scripture say? “Get rid of the slave woman and her son. For the slave woman’s son will never share the inheritance with the son of the free woman.”ⁱ (31) So then, brothers, we are children not of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

^a Or *the elemental spirits of the universe*. ^b Christ obeyed and fulfilled every commandment in the law, and as the perfect God-Man, He became the Substitute for human beings. His perfect obedience stands in place of our disobedience, and it alone provides us with redemption. ^c Some manuscripts read *your*. ^d *Abba* is an extremely intimate Aramaic term for a father. *Dad* is probably its closest English equivalent. ^e Paul seems to have used the term *Arabia* for the lightly settled region to the east and south of Israel. ^f Some manuscripts read *and she is the mother*

of all of us. ^g Isa. 54:1 (Septuagint) ^h Some manuscripts read *we.* ⁱ Gen. 21:10

CHAPTER 5

Freedom in Christ

(1) It was for the sake of freedom that Christ set us free. So continue to stand firm, and don't allow yourselves to be burdened with a yoke of slavery again. (2) Listen carefully! I, Paul, am telling you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.

(3) Once again, I am directing my testimony to every person^a who lets himself be circumcised. He is obligated to obey the entire law! (4) Those of you who are trying to be justified by law have been cut off from Christ and have fallen away from grace. (5) But through the Spirit, we are waiting eagerly for the hope that finds its basis in justification by faith.^b (6) For in our union with Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision have any value. What counts is faith that demonstrates its power through love.

(7) You were running a good race. Who blocked your path and kept you from following the truth? (8) Whatever the persuasion that was used, it did not come from the One Who called you. (9) Remember—a little yeast works its way through the whole batch of dough! (10) The Lord has given me confidence that your thinking about this matter will not differ from mine. But the person who is confusing you will suffer condemnation, whoever he may be.

(11) Brothers, if I continue to preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case, the cross would be eliminated as a stumbling block. (12) Now as for those people who are upsetting you, I wish they would go all the way and castrate themselves!

The Spirit and the Sinful Nature

(13) Yes, brothers, you were called to be free. But don't turn that freedom into an operating base for your sinful nature. Instead, you must continue to serve one another in love. (14) For the entire law has been summed up in a single commandment: "You must love your neighbor as yourself."^c (15) But if you go on biting and devouring one another, watch out, or you will be destroyed by one another.

(16) So I say, continue to walk in fellowship with the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of your sinful nature. (17) For the sinful nature keeps pitting

its desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit keeps fighting against the sinful nature. They are in constant conflict with one another, and this explains why you cannot do the things you want to do.^d (18) But since you are being led by the Spirit, you are not under law.^e

(19) Now the deeds that the sinful nature produces are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, lewd conduct, (20) idolatry, witchcraft,^f hostility, quarreling, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, conflicts, divisions, (21) envy,^g drunkenness, wild parties, and the like. I am warning you, as I did before, that people who continue to practice these things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

(22) But the fruit that the Spirit produces is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, (23) humility, and self-control. There is no law against these things! (24) As a matter of fact, those who belong to Christ^h have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. (25) Now since we are living by the Spirit, let us continue to be guided by the Spirit. (26) So let's not become arrogant and provoke or envy one another.

^aThe Greek term that has been translated *person* is gender inclusive. ^b Or *But by faith and through the Spirit, we are waiting eagerly for the hope that finds its basis in justification.* ^c Lev. 19:18 (Septuagint) ^d Since all Christians continue to experience this conflict between the Holy Spirit and their own sinful natures, they must often repent of their imperfect behavior. ^e Only the Holy Spirit can sanctify; the law is powerless to change us in any way. ^f Or *sorcery*, ^g Some manuscripts insert *murder* here. ^h Some manuscripts read *Christ Jesus*.

CHAPTER 6

Bearing One Another's Burdens

(1) Brothers, if a person^a is caught in some transgression, those of you who are spiritual should restore him gently. And continue to watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.

(2) Make it your practice to bear one another's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ. (3) For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he is deceiving himself. (4) So each person should examine his own actions. Then he can find satisfaction in his own accomplishments, without comparing himself to someone else. (5) For each person must carry his own load.

(6) When anyone is being instructed in the word, he should share the good things he has with his instructor.

Sowing and Reaping

(7) Don't be misled. No one can treat God with contempt. A person will reap whatever he sows. (8) If he sows in the field of his sinful nature, he will reap a harvest of destruction. But if he sows in the field of the Spirit, he will reap a harvest of eternal life.

(9) We should not become tired of doing good. For at the proper time, we will reap a harvest if we don't give up. (10) So whenever we have an opportunity, let us do good to everyone, especially to the family of believers.

Concluding Remarks

(11) See how large the letters are as I write to you with my own hand!^b

(12) Those people who want to put up a good front in external matters are trying to force circumcision on you. And they are only doing it to avoid persecution for the cross of Christ. (13) Why even those who practice circumcision break the law! And yet they want you to be circumcised, so they can boast about a mark in your flesh.

(14) But it would be unthinkable for me to boast—except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which^c the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (15) Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision amount to anything. The only thing that counts is a new creation! (16) May peace and mercy be on all who follow this principle—yes, on the Israel of God!^d

(17) From now on, let no one cause me trouble. For I bear the brands of Jesus on my body.^e (18) May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

^a The Greek term that has been translated *person* is gender inclusive. See also verse 7.

^b It was Paul's custom to dictate his letters to a secretary. At this point, Paul probably took the pen from his secretary and finished writing the letter with his own hand. It is uncertain why he used large letters as he wrote. Perhaps it was for emphasis or because his eyesight was poor. ^c Or *by Whom* ^d Or *May peace and mercy be on all who follow this principle, and on the Israel of God!* ^e Paul was probably referring to the scars on his body that resulted from the many whippings he had received in the service of Christ.

STUDY GUIDE

- (1) Get a Bible commentary or some other book on the New Testament, and research the *North Galatian Theory* and the *South Galatian Theory*. Which theory do you agree with?
- (2) What are some different kinds of “good news” that exist today? How do they differ from the real good news? (*Gal. 1:6-9*)
- (3) What did Paul mean when he said that he had been crucified with Christ? How can Christ’s death be counted as our death? (*Gal. 2:20*)
- (4) Can one person actually redeem another person by being punished in that person’s place? Is this what Christ did for us? How does Christ’s death nearly two thousand years ago affect our lives today? (*Gal. 3:13*)
- (5) How does the law lead us to Christ? (*Gal. 3:24*)
- (6) What does Gal. 3:28 imply about the equality of all human beings?
- (7) What were the special times and seasons that the Galatians were observing, and why was Paul opposed to this? (*Gal. 4:10-11*)
- (8) Many males are circumcised for health reasons today. Is it wrong to be circumcised? Why did Paul say that Christ is of no value at all to someone who is circumcised? (*Gal. 5:1-6*)
- (9) How can we gently restore someone who is caught in a transgression? (*Gal. 6:1*)
- (10) Can you give some examples of how people reap what they sow? (*Gal. 6:7-8*)
- (11) What people constitute the true Israel of God? (*Gal. 6:16*)
- (12) Give a good definition of justification by faith. Why is this doctrine so important?

Ephesians

CHAPTER 1

Greetings from Paul

(1) From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will.

To His holy and faithful people^a who are in union with Christ Jesus. (2) May you have grace and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Predestined in Christ

(3) Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! For in our union with Christ, He has crowned us with every spiritual blessing in heaven. (4) Before the world's creation, He chose us in Christ to be holy and blameless in His sight. (5) Moved by love and in agreement with His merciful purpose and will, He predestined us to be adopted as His children through Jesus Christ.^b (6) He did this to bring praise to His glorious grace—the grace that He freely gave us in the One He loves. (7) In our union with Christ, we have been redeemed through His blood. Yes, our transgressions have been forgiven because of the wealth of His grace.

(8) Now along with every kind of wisdom and insight, God lavished this grace on us (9) when He revealed the mystery^c of His will to us. He did this in agreement with His merciful purpose, which He publicly displayed in Christ. (10) This purpose will be put into effect when the times we live in have run their course, and it will bring everything in heaven and earth under Christ's authority.

(11) In Christ, we were also designated as God's personal possession. For we were predestined according to the plan of the One Who accomplishes everything by His design and will. (12) And it was God's plan that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, would live to praise His glory.

(13) But you have also heard the message of truth (the good news about your salvation), and you have believed in Christ. Now this means that in your union with Christ, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. (14) For the Spirit is a down payment that guarantees our inheritance until God, to His glory and praise, redeems those who belong to Him.

God's Power in Christ

(15) Therefore, because I have heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all of God's holy people,^d (16) I never stop thanking God on your behalf. And whenever I mention you in my prayers,^e (17) I keep asking the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, to give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation, along with an intimate knowledge of Him.

(18) Then your minds will be enlightened, and you will comprehend the hope that God's calling offers you—the rich glory that His holy people will inherit, (19) and the surpassing greatness of His power that is available to us believers. God's power was displayed when He exerted His mighty strength (20) in Christ. He put that strength to work by raising Christ from the dead and by seating Him at His right hand in heaven, (21) far above all rule and authority, all power and dominion, and any name that can be named, not only in this age, but also in the age to come.

(22) God placed all things under Christ's feet and established Him as Head over everything for the benefit of the church, (23) which is His body. So the church is completely filled by the One Who fills everything in every way.

^a Although many manuscripts insert the phrase *in Ephesus* here, the earliest and best manuscripts omit these words. This epistle may have been intended for more than one church. Perhaps it was first dispatched to the church in Ephesus, with which it was closely associated. Later, it may have been passed on to the churches in Laodicea and Colosse as well. If this scenario approximates what actually took place, the phrase *in Ephesus* could have been added to copies of the epistle that circulated in the Ephesian church. This scenario could also explain Paul's reference in Col. 4:16 to a Laodicean letter, which would then be identified with this epistle. ^b Or (4) *Before the world's creation, He chose us in Christ to be holy and blameless in love before Him. (5) And in agreement with His merciful purpose and will, He predestined us to be adopted as His children through Jesus Christ.*

^c The Greek term that has been translated *mystery* refers to a special truth which God has revealed to Christians. ^d Some manuscripts read *your faithfulness to the Lord Jesus and to all of God's holy people.* ^e Or *I never stop thanking God on your behalf whenever I mention you in my prayers.*

CHAPTER 2

Saved by Grace, Not by Works

(1) You were dead because of the transgressions and sins (2) that you once lived in. For you were following the ways^a of this world and the prince who governs the realm of the air^b—the spirit who is now at work among those who are disobedient. (3) At one time, all of us behaved like they do. We indulged the cravings of our sinful nature as we fulfilled its desires and thoughts. And like the rest of humanity, we by nature deserved God's holy anger.

(4) But God is rich in mercy. And because of His great love for us, (5) He made us alive with Christ^c when we were dead in our transgressions. Yes, you have been saved by grace! (6) For God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms.

Now God accomplished these things through our union with Christ Jesus, (7) so that in the coming ages, He could demonstrate the surpassing wealth of His grace by showing us kindness in Christ Jesus. (8) For you have been saved by grace through faith — and this is not your own doing; it is God’s gift. (9) It does not depend on works, so no one can boast. (10) For we are God’s handiwork. And in our union with Christ Jesus, God created us for a life of good works, which He had already planned for us to do.

Jews and Gentiles

(11) So then, you must remember your former situation. By nature, you were Gentiles, and you were called “the uncircumcised” by those who claim a physical circumcision—a circumcision made in their flesh by human hands. (12) At that time, you were without Christ. You had been excluded from citizenship in Israel,^d and you were strangers to the covenants and the promise that goes with them. You were without hope and without God in the world.

(13) But now, in union with Christ Jesus, you who were once far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (14) For Christ Himself is our peace. In His flesh, He has united Jews and Gentiles by destroying the wall of hostility that divided them. (15) He did this by abolishing the law with its commandments and decrees. For out of these two peoples, it was His intention to create one new humanity^e in union with Himself, and so make peace.

(16) Now in this united body, Christ has reconciled both peoples to God through the cross, by which their hostility has been killed.^f (17) And He came and proclaimed the good news of peace to you who were far away and to those who were near. (18) For by one Spirit, He has provided both of us with access to the Father.

(19) Therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with God’s holy people and members of God’s household. (20) You were built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the Cornerstone. (21) In Him, the whole building is being fitted together, and it continues to rise into a holy sanctuary in its union with the Lord. (22) And in union with Him, you are also being fitted together into a spiritual dwelling place for God.

^a Or possibly *the god* ^b This is a clear reference to Satan. Paul may mean that demonic beings inhabit invisible dimensions in the atmosphere around us.

^c Some manuscripts read *He brought us to life in union with Christ*. ^d Or *the commonwealth of Israel*, ^e The Greek term that has been translated *humanity* is gender inclusive. ^f Or *by killing their hostility in Himself*.

CHAPTER 3

The Revelation of God's Mystery

(1) Now this is the reason that I, Paul, am a prisoner of Christ Jesus^a on behalf of you Gentiles.—

(2) Surely you have heard about the grace that God has entrusted to me for your benefit! (3) It was through a revelation that this mystery^b was disclosed to me, as I have already written briefly. (4) And by reading what I have written, you can comprehend my insight into the mystery of Christ. (5) God did not reveal this mystery to the people of other generations in the way that the Spirit has revealed it to His holy apostles and prophets at the present time. (6) I am referring to the fact that in union with Christ Jesus and through His good news, the Gentiles have the same inheritance, belong to the same body, and share the same promise as the Jews do.

(7) Now I became a minister^c of this good news through a gift of God's grace, which He gave me by exercising His power. (8) Although I am the very least of His holy people, God gave me the privilege of proclaiming the boundless wealth of Christ to the Gentiles. (9) He wants me to enlighten everyone about His ultimate plan for this mystery^d—the plan that has been hidden for ages with the One Who created all things.

(10) It was God's plan that through the church, His wisdom in all its variety would be revealed to the heavenly rulers and authorities at the present time. (11) This was in keeping with His eternal purpose, which He achieved in Christ Jesus our Lord. (12) In our union with Christ and through faith in Him, we can approach God boldly and confidently. (13) So I am asking you not to lose heart because of what I am suffering on your behalf. For it is your^e glory!^f—

Paul's Prayer for the Church

(14) Now this is why I kneel before the Father,^g (15) from Whom the whole family in heaven and earth receives its name. (16) I am praying that out of His glorious wealth and through His Spirit, He will give you inner strength and power. (17) Then Christ will live in your hearts through faith, and you will be rooted and grounded in love. (18) I am praying that with all of God's holy people, you will be able to comprehend the width and length and height and depth (19) of Christ's love, and that you will experience His love—a love that transcends knowledge. Then you will be filled with all the fullness of God.

Doxology

(20) Praise be to the One Who can do immeasurably more than anything we can ask or imagine—through His power that is working among^h us. (21) To Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations, forever and ever! Amen.

^a Some manuscripts omit *Jesus*. ^b The Greek term that has been translated *mystery* refers to a special truth which God has revealed to Christians. See also verses 4, 5, and 9. ^c Or *servant* ^d Some manuscripts read *He wants His ultimate plan for this mystery to be illuminated*. ^e Some manuscripts read *our*. ^f Note that verses 2-13 are a long parenthetical statement, and verse 14 continues the thought that Paul began in verse 1. ^g Some manuscripts read *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, ^h Or *in*

CHAPTER 4

One Spirit and One Body

(1) So as a prisoner who is in union with the Lord, I urge you to live lives that are worthy of those whom God has called. (2) Be completely humble and gentle. Be patient, and accept one another with love. (3) Through the peace that binds you together, always do your best to maintain the unity that finds its source in the Spirit. (4) For there is one body and one Spirit, just as there is one hope to which you have been called. (5) There is one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. (6) There is one God and Father of all, Who is over everything and through everything and in everything.

Spiritual Gifts

(7) Moreover, a special grace has been given to each of us. This grace is a gift from Christ that God has measured out to us. (8) Therefore, scripture says:

“When He ascended on high,
He led captivity itself as His captive,
and He gave gifts to His people.”^a

(9) Now what does the expression, “He ascended,” mean? It can only mean that He also descended^b to the lower, earthly regions. (10) The One Who descended is none other than the One Who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He could fill everything. (11) And He gave us apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers—(12) to equip God’s holy people for the work of ministry^c (that is, the building up of the body of Christ).

(13) These gifts will be necessary until all of us attain unity in the faith, along with an accurate knowledge of God's Son. Then we will encounter a perfect Man—the fullness of Christ, Who is the Standard of maturity. (14) And as a result, we will no longer be babies who are tossed about by waves and whirled around by every gust of doctrine and by the trickery of human beings, who devise cunning schemes to lead us astray. (15) Instead, as we practice the truth in love, we will grow up completely into the Head, Who is Christ. (16) In Him, the whole body is united and joined together by every ligament with which it is equipped. And as each bodily part performs its function, the growth of the body is promoted, and it builds itself up in love.

Your New Life in Christ

(17) So I am telling you this and insisting on it in my union with the Lord: You must no longer live like the pagans do. For their thoughts are focused on meaningless things; (18) their minds have been darkened, and because of their ignorance and hardness of heart, they have become strangers to the life that God gives us. (19) Now since they have become callous, they have given themselves over to lewd conduct and to the greedy pursuit of every kind of moral impurity.

(20) But this is not the way you learned to follow Christ. (21) (And surely you listened to Him and were taught by Him, since truth is found in Jesus!) (22) No, you learned to lay aside your former way of life (your old self that is being corrupted by its deceptive desires). (23) You were taught to be renewed continually in mind and spirit, (24) and to clothe yourselves with the new self that was created to be like God in righteousness and true holiness.

(25) So since you laid aside the Lie,^d you must speak truthfully to your neighbors.^e For as members of one body, we belong to one another.

(26) Stop sinning when you are angry.^f Don't let the sun go down on your temper. (27) And don't give the devil an opportunity to work.

(28) The thief must no longer steal. Instead, he must work hard and do a good job with his hands,^g so he will have something to share with the needy.

(29) Don't let any foul language come out of your mouth, but only what is good. Then your words will provide constructive help when it is needed for the benefit of those who hear you. (30) Don't grieve God's Holy Spirit. For the Spirit has sealed you for the day of redemption.

(31) Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, shouting, and slander, along with every kind of malice. (32) Be kind and compassionate to one another. And continue to forgive each other, just as God in Christ forgave you.^h

^a See Ps. 68:18. The Greek term that has been translated *people, human beings*, or *self* in verses 8, 14, 22, and 24 is gender inclusive. ^b Some manuscripts read *that first, He also descended*. ^c Or *service* ^d This is the ultimate Lie that denies God and Jesus Christ. ^e Zech. 8:16 ^f Ps. 4:4 (Septuagint) ^g Some

manuscripts read *his own hands*.,^h Some manuscripts read *us*.

CHAPTER 5

Imitate God

(1) So then, imitate God, as His dear children. (2) Continue to live a life of love, just as Christ loved us^a and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (3) Don't let sexual immorality, moral impurity of any kind, or greed even be mentioned among you, since these sins are inappropriate for God's holy people. (4) Obscenity, foolish talk, and crude joking are also out of place. Instead, let there be thanksgiving.

(5) For you need to keep this in mind: No one who is sexually immoral, impure, or greedy (a greedy person is an idolater!) has any share in the kingdom of Christ and God.^b (6) Don't let anyone deceive you with empty words. It is because of these sins that God's holy anger is coming on those who are disobedient. (7) So don't be their partners!

(8) At one time, you were "darkness," but now you are "light" in your union with the Lord. So continue to live as children of light. (9) For the light^c produces a harvest of goodness, righteousness, and truth. (10) Keep trying to determine what is pleasing to the Lord, (11) and stop participating in deeds of darkness that never produce anything good. Instead, continue to expose them. (12) For it is shameful even to mention the things that people do in secret.

(13) But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible. (14) For light makes everything visible.^d This is why it is said:

"Awake, sleeper!
Rise from the dead!
And Christ will shine on you."^e

(15) So be careful how you live. Don't be unwise. Be wise. (16) And always make the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. (17) Don't be foolish, but try to understand what the Lord wants. (18) And stop getting drunk on wine, which leads to wild living. Instead, continue to be filled with the Spirit, (19) as you recite psalms, hymns, and spiritual^f songs to one another. Make it your practice to sing from your hearts, as you play music^g to the Lord. (20) And always give thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Counsel for Christian Households

(21) Keep submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

(22) Wives, submit to your husbands, as you would to the Lord. (23) For the husband is the head of his wife in the same way that Christ is the Head of the church. And He Himself is the Savior of that body. (24) Now just as the church submits to Christ, so wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

(25) Husbands, love your wives in the same way that Christ loved the church. He gave Himself up for it, (26) to set it apart as holy. And He purified it by washing it with water through the word. (27) He did these things to present the church to Himself in all its glory, with no stain or wrinkle or any kind of blemish, but holy and blameless.

(28) Now in the same way, husbands have a continuing obligation to love their wives, just as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife loves himself! (29) After all, no one ever hated his own body. Instead, he nourishes it and takes care of it, just as Christ takes care of the church. (30) And Christ does this^h because we are members of His body.ⁱ

(31) “For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother, and cling to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”^j (32) There is a great mystery^k here, and I am applying it to the relationship between Christ and the church. (33) Nevertheless, each husband among you must love his wife as he loves himself, and a wife must respect her husband.

^a Some manuscripts read *you*. ^b Or *the kingdom of Christ, Who is God*. ^c Some manuscripts read *the Spirit*. ^d Or *In fact, everything that is visible is light*. ^e The source of this quotation is unknown. It may have been part of an early Christian hymn. ^f Some manuscripts omit the word *spiritual*. ^g Or *make music*. ^h Although the words *And Christ does this* do not appear in the original text, they have been added for clarification. ⁱ Some manuscripts read *because we are members of His body—of His flesh and bones*. ^j Gen. 2:24 ^k The Greek term that has been translated *mystery* refers to a special truth which God has revealed to Christians.

CHAPTER 6

(1) Children, obey your parents in your union with the Lord.^a For this is the right thing to do. (2) “Honor your father and mother” is the first commandment^b with a promise added to it—(3) “so that everything will go well with you, and you will have a long life on the earth.”^c (4) Fathers, don’t make your children angry. But bring them up with the Lord’s training and instruction.

(5) Slaves, obey your human masters with fear and trembling. And do it with sincere hearts, as if you were obeying Christ. (6) Don’t offer them your service only when they are watching you, to try to gain their favor. But serve them like slaves of Christ, who are whole-heartedly doing what God desires. (7) Maintain a positive attitude when you obey them, as if you were serving the Lord and not human beings.^d (8) For you are aware that the Lord will reward each person for whatever good he has done, whether he is slave or free. (9) Masters, treat your slaves with respect,^e and don’t threaten them. For you are aware that you and your slaves have the same Master in heaven, and He does not show favoritism.

The Full Armor of God

(10) Finally, continue to find your strength in the Lord and in His mighty power. (11) Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. (12) For we^f are not fighting against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against authorities, against cosmic powers that control this dark world, and against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm. (13) So take up the full armor of God. Then you will be able to offer resistance when times are at their worst, and after you have accomplished everything, you will still be standing firm.^g

(14) So stand firm:

By fastening the belt of truth around your waist.

By putting on the breastplate of righteousness.^h

(15) By fitting your feet with shoes
that prepare you to bring the good news of peace.ⁱ

(16) And along with everything else,

by taking up the shield of faith.

With it, you will be able to extinguish
all the flaming arrows that come from the evil one.

(17) Take the helmet of salvation^j

and the sword of the Spirit,

which is the word of God.

(18) In your union with the Spirit, continue to pray on all occasions, as you utilize every kind of prayer and petition. And with this as your goal, stay alert, and be completely persistent in your prayers for all of God’s holy people. (19) Pray

especially for me—that the right words will be given to me when I open my mouth to speak. Then I will be able to reveal the mystery^k of the good news^l without fear. (20) It is on behalf of this good news that I am an ambassador in chains. So pray that I will declare it as boldly as I should.

Final Greetings

(21) Tychicus, a dear brother and faithful minister^m in the Lord’s service will tell you everything about me. Then you will know about my circumstances and what I am doing. (22) I am sending him to you on purpose—to let you know about our situation and to bring you courage.

(23) May God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ provide the brothers with peace and love, along with faith. (24) May all who love the Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love find grace.ⁿ

^a Some manuscripts omit *in your union with the Lord*. ^b Or *is a primary commandment* ^c Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16 ^d The Greek term that has been translated *human beings* is gender inclusive. ^e Literally, *treat them the same way*, ^f Some manuscripts read *you*. ^g Literally, *and after you have accomplished everything, to stand*. ^h An allusion to Isa. 59:17 ⁱ An allusion to Isa. 52:7 ^j Another allusion to Isa. 59:17 ^k The Greek term that has been translated *mystery* refers to a special truth which God has revealed to Christians. ^l Some manuscripts omit *of the good news*. ^m Or *servant* ⁿ Some manuscripts conclude with the word *Amen*.

STUDY GUIDE

(1) Does the fact that God predestined Christians to be saved imply that He predestined others to be lost? Can you find any evidence in scripture that some people were predestined to be lost? (*Eph. 1:4-5*)

(2) How can the doctrine of predestination bring us comfort? (*Eph. 1:4-5*)

(3) In what sense is the Spirit a “down payment” on our heavenly inheritance? (*Eph. 1:14*)

(4) What does Paul mean when he says that we are dead because of our transgressions and sins? Define the doctrine of “total depravity.” Is Paul teaching this doctrine? (*Eph. 2:1*)

(5) How can Paul claim that we have already been seated with Christ in the heavenly realms? How was this accomplished in our union with Christ? What does Paul mean when he says that we are in union with Christ? (*Eph. 2:6*)

- (6) If we are saved by grace alone, why are good works important? (*Eph. 2:8-10*)
- (7) Does Paul contradict himself regarding the status of the law under the new covenant? How can we reconcile what Paul says about the law? (*Rom. 3:31; Eph. 2:15*)
- (8) Why does Paul say that his suffering was the glory of his fellow Christians? (*Eph. 3:13*)
- (9) What spiritual gift(s) has Christ given you? (*Eph. 4:7-12*)
- (10) What is the purpose of spiritual gifts? (*Eph. 4:12-16*)
- (11) How can we be angry without sinning? Is there such a thing as righteous anger? (*Eph. 4:26*)
- (12) What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit, and how can we continue to be filled with the Spirit? (*Eph. 5:18*)
- (13) How should Christians submit to one another? (*Eph. 5:21*)
- (14) How should wives submit to their husbands? (*Eph. 5:22-24*)
- (15) In what way is the relationship between Christ and His church similar to a marriage? (*Eph. 5:22-33*)
- (16) What does it mean to pray in your union with the Spirit? (*Eph. 6:18*)
- (17) Ephesians has been classified as one of Paul's "Prison Epistles." Can you find any evidence that this epistle was written in prison?

Philippians

CHAPTER 1

Greetings from Paul

(1) From Paul and Timothy, who are servants of Christ Jesus.

To all of God's holy people at Philippi^a who are in union with Christ Jesus, along with their supervisors^b and ministers.^c (2) May you have grace and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's Thanksgiving and Prayer

(3) I keep thanking my God whenever I think of you.^d (4) And whenever I pray for all of you, I always do it with joy. (5) For you have been my partners in spreading the good news from the first day until now. (6) So I am confident that the One Who began a good work in^e you will carry it forward toward completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

(7) It is only right for me to feel this way about all of you, because you are in my heart.^f For whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the good news, you are all my partners in sharing God's grace. (8) As a matter of fact, God can testify how I long for all of you with the tender affection of Christ Jesus. (9) And I am praying that your love will overflow more and more with accurate knowledge and every kind of insight. (10) Then you will be able to determine what is best, and you will be pure and blameless until the day of Christ. (11) For you will reap the abundant fruit of a righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

The Importance of Proclaiming Christ

(12) Brothers, I want you to be aware that the things that have happened to me have really advanced the good news. (13) For it has become plain to the whole imperial guard^g and to everyone else that I am in chains because of Christ. (14) In fact, my chains have given most of the brothers confidence in their union with the Lord^h to speak the messageⁱ more boldly and fearlessly than ever before.

(15) Now it is true that some people are preaching Christ because they have a jealous and quarrelsome spirit, while others are doing it because of their good will. (16) Those who are doing it out of love are aware that I have been put here to defend the good news. (17) On the other hand, those who are proclaiming Christ out of selfish ambition have impure motives and are expecting to stir up trouble for me while I am in chains.

(18) But what difference does it make? The important thing is that one way or another—whether from false motives or true—Christ is being proclaimed. And

I am filled with joy because of it! Yes, I will continue to rejoice, (19) because I know that through your prayers and the help that comes from the Spirit of Jesus Christ, this entire situation will lead to my deliverance.^j

Living and Dying

(20) It is my confident hope that I will have nothing to be ashamed of. Instead, I want to speak with complete boldness, so that now as always, and whether my verdict is life or death, Christ will be honored in my body. (21) For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain.

(22) If I continue living in my body, there will be productive work for me to do. But which would I prefer? I don't know! (23) I am being pulled in two directions. I long to leave this life and be with Christ, which is a far better thing.^k (24) And yet for your sake, it is more important that I remain in my body.

(25) Now because I am convinced of this, I am certain that I will remain here and continue in your service—to help you make progress and find joy in your faith. (26) And after I have been restored to you, your boasting in Christ Jesus will overflow along with mine.

Contending for Your Faith

(27) But regardless of whether I come to see you or stay away, conduct yourselves as citizens who are worthy of the good news about Christ. Then I will hear that you are standing firm with one purpose, and that with united hearts and minds, you are contending side by side for your faith in the good news, (28) without allowing your enemies to intimidate you in any way. This is how you can prove to them that they will be destroyed and that you will be saved, and this proof comes from God.

(29) For you have received a gracious gift—the gift not only of believing in Christ, but also of suffering on His behalf. (30) And you are going through the same kind of struggle that you saw me engage in, and now hear that I am still engaged in.

^a *Philippi* received its name from Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great. It was a leading city in Macedonia and a Roman colony. ^b Traditionally, *bishops* ^c Or *along with the supervisors who serve them.* ^d Or *whenever you think of me.* ^e Or *among* ^f Or *I am in your heart.* ^g Or *throughout the whole imperial palace* ^h Or *my chains have given most of the brothers who are in union with the Lord confidence* ⁱ Some manuscripts read *God's message.* ^j Or *my salvation.* ^k For a more complete exposition of Paul's thinking regarding life after death, see 2 Cor. 5:1-10.

CHAPTER 2

Practice Humility

(1) Have you found any encouragement in Christ? Have you received any comfort from His love? Have you experienced any fellowship in your union with the Spirit? Have you felt any tenderness and compassion? (2) Then make my joy complete by being united in your thinking, by sharing the same love, by living in harmony, and by keeping one purpose in mind. (3) Don't let your thinking be motivated by selfish ambition or egotism. But practice humility, and always regard others as better than yourselves. (4) Each of you should be concerned about the interests of others, and not merely your own interests.

The Attitude of Christ Jesus

(5) You should have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

(6) Although He existed in God's form,
He did not regard equality with God
as a prize to be seized.

(7) Instead, He emptied Himself—
by taking a servant's form,
by becoming like human beings,^a
and by being found in human guise.

(8) Then He humbled Himself
and became obedient
to the point of death—
even death on a cross!

(9) Because of this,
God exalted Him
to the highest place,
and gave Him the name
that is above every other name.

(10) So at the name of Jesus,
every being in heaven
and on earth
and under the earth
will kneel.

(11) And every tongue will confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Shining like Stars

(12) Therefore, my dear friends, since you have always been obedient, not only when I was with you, but even more now that I am away, continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. (13) For God is working in you—to give you both the desire and the power to do what pleases Him.

(14) Do everything without complaining or arguing. (15) Then you will be blameless and innocent. And as God's unblemished children in a warped and twisted generation, you will shine like stars in the cosmos^b (16) as you cling to the word of life.^c

Now on the day of Christ, this will give me a basis for boasting that my running and struggling were not wasted effort. (17) But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service that flow from your faith, I am glad, and I share my joy with all of you. (18) And in the same way, you should also be glad and share your joy with me.

Timothy and Epaphroditus

(19) In my union with the Lord Jesus, I am hoping to send Timothy to you soon, so I can hear some news about you that will cheer me up. (20) I have no one else like him! For he takes a genuine interest in your welfare. (21) Everyone else is wrapped up in his own interests and not those of Christ Jesus.^d (22) But you know how Timothy has proved himself! Like a son working with his father, he was at my service in proclaiming the good news. (23) So I am hoping to send him as soon as I find out what is going to happen to me. (24) And in my union with the Lord, I am confident that I will also be coming to visit you before long.

(25) However, I think I need to send Epaphroditus back to you. He is my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, whom you sent to help me in my need. (26) He has been longing for all of you,^e and he is distressed because you heard that he was sick. (27) Yes, he was so sick that he almost died. But God was merciful to him, and not only to him, but to me as well—to keep me from having one sorrow after another.

(28) So I am very eager to send him—to give you the joy of seeing him again and to relieve some of my anxiety. (29) Be sure to welcome him in the Lord with complete joy, and continue to honor people like him. (30) For he risked his life and almost died on account of Christ's work^f and to make up for the help you could not give me.

^a The Greek term that has been translated *human beings/human* in verse 7 is gender inclusive. ^b Or *like lights in the world* ^c Or *as you hold out the word of life*. ^d Some manuscripts read *Jesus Christ*. ^e Some manuscripts read *He has been longing to see all of you*. ^f Some manuscripts read *the Lord's work*.

CHAPTER 3

Keep Rejoicing in the Lord!

(1) Finally, my brothers, keep rejoicing in the Lord! It is no problem for me to repeat what I have written to you before, and it is necessary for your safety. (2) Always be on your guard against the dogs^a—those evil workers who mutilate the flesh. (3) For we are the people with the real circumcision—we who worship by the Spirit of God^b and who boast in Christ Jesus.

The Righteousness from God

We have not put any confidence in ourselves,^c (4) although I could claim a basis for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he can put confidence in himself, I have even more reason to think so. (5) I was circumcised on the eighth day.^d I am from the nation of Israel and the tribe of Benjamin—a Hebrew born and bred! As far as my practice of the law was concerned, I was a Pharisee. (6) As far as my zeal was concerned, I persecuted the church. And as far as legalistic righteousness was concerned, I was blameless.

(7) But whatever my advantages were, I now regard them as loss for the sake of Christ. (8) What is more, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake, I have lost all things! In fact, I regard them as feces—so I can gain Christ (9) and be found in union with Him. I don't have a righteousness of my own that comes from obeying the law. No, I have a righteousness that comes through faith in Christ—the righteousness from God that depends on faith.

Paul's Pursuit of Perfection

(10) My goal is to know Christ—to experience the power of His resurrection and to share in His suffering by becoming like Him in His death. (11) And as a result, I hope to participate in the resurrection from the dead. (12) Now I don't mean that I have already attained my goal or have already become perfect. But I continue my pursuit, as I make a real attempt to lay hold of it. For Christ Jesus^e has certainly laid hold of me!

(13) Brothers, I don't think of myself as having perfection in my grasp.^f But there is one thing I do. Forgetting what lies behind and straining toward what lies ahead, (14) I keep my goal in sight as I continue my pursuit of the heavenly prize to which God has called us in Christ Jesus. (15) So then, those of us who are "perfect"^g should adopt this point of view! And if you hold any other opinion, you can count on God to reveal the truth to you! (16) Nevertheless, we should live up to the standard of conduct^h we have already reached.

Citizens of Heaven

(17) So join together in imitating me, brothers, and fix your attention on those who follow the pattern of living we gave you. (18) For as I used to tell you often, and now tell you with tears in my eyes, many people are living as enemies of the cross of Christ. (19) Their destiny is destruction; their god is their appetite, and they exult in their shame, while their minds are focused on earthly things.

(20) But we are citizens of heaven! And we are eagerly awaiting a Savior Who will come from heaven—the Lord Jesus Christ! (21) For through the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control, He will transform our humble bodies and make them like His glorious body.

^a In the New Testament, the term *dogs* is used in a figurative sense for evil people. ^b One important manuscript omits the phrase *of God*, while other manuscripts read *we who worship God by the Spirit*. ^c Literally, *in flesh*—see also verse 4, where the same phrase has been rendered *in himself*. ^d According to Gen. 17:12, every male Jewish baby was to be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. See also Lev. 12:3. ^e Some manuscripts omit *Jesus*, while a few manuscripts read *Jesus Christ*. ^f Some manuscripts read *in my grasp yet*. ^g The quotation marks around the word *perfect* suggest that Paul was engaging in tongue-in-cheek wordplay with certain individuals who claimed sinless perfection for themselves. An alternate translation would be *those of us who are spiritually mature*. ^h Although the words *standard of conduct* do not appear in the better manuscripts, they are implied.

CHAPTER 4

(1) So then, my dear brothers—you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown—this is what it means to stand firm in the Lord.

Further Instructions

(2) I urge Euodia and Syntyche to agree in their union with Lord. (3) Yes, and I am also asking you, loyal comrade,^a to continue helping these women. For they have shared my struggle in spreading the good news, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

(4) Rejoice in the Lord always! I will say it again—rejoice! (5) Let everyone know how gentle you are. For the Lord is near! (6) Don't be anxious about anything. But in every situation, present your requests to God in prayers and petitions while you give Him thanks. (7) And the peace of God that transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

(8) Finally, brothers, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, and whatever is morally excellent or worthy of praise—continue to ponder these things. (9) Keep practicing what you learned and received and heard from me, and what you saw me do. And the God of peace will be with you.

The Philippians and Their Gifts

(10) In my union with the Lord, I am very happy that your concern for me has finally blossomed again. Of course, you were concerned all along, but you had no opportunity to show it.

(11) Now I'm not saying this because I need anything. For I have learned to be self-sufficient in whatever situation I find myself. (12) I know how to survive on humble provisions, and I know what it means to have plenty. In each and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of being content, whether satisfied or hungry, whether living in plenty or in need. (13) I can do everything through the One^b Who keeps giving me strength. (14) And yet it was nice of you to share in my hardship.

(15) Moreover, as you Philippians are well aware, when I set out from Macedonia^c in the early days of proclaiming the good news, you were the only church that entered into partnership with me in this matter of giving and receiving. (16) Even when I was in Thessalonica,^d you repeatedly sent me aid when I was in need. (17) I'm not saying this because I'm looking for a gift. No, I'm looking for deeds that pay spiritual dividends to your account.

(18) As a matter of fact, you have paid me in full, and I have plenty. For now that Epaphroditus has brought me your gifts, I am amply supplied. They are a fragrant offering—an acceptable sacrifice that is pleasing to God. (19) And my God will supply all your needs out of His glorious wealth that is in Christ Jesus.

(20) Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever! Amen.

Final Greetings

(21) I send my greetings to all of God's holy people who are in union with Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send you greetings. (22) All of God's holy people send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.

(23) May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.^e

^aOr *loyal Syzygus*—although this term may be a proper name, it seems more likely that it refers to an individual or to the entire congregation. ^bSome manuscripts read *through Christ*. ^c*Macedonia* was a Roman province on the northern fringe of Greece. ^d*Thessalonica* (modern Salonika) was an important Macedonian city that was located southwest of Philippi. ^eSome manuscripts conclude with the word *Amen*.

STUDY GUIDE

- (1) Did Paul expect to be with Christ at the moment he died or at the resurrection?
(*Phil. 1:22-24; 2 Cor. 5:1-10*)
- (2) Is faith in Christ a choice on our part, or is it a gift from God? Could it be both? (*Phil. 1:29*)
- (3) How can suffering be considered a gift? (*Phil. 1:29*)
- (4) In what sense was the incarnation of Christ an emptying of Himself?
(*Phil. 2:7*)
- (5) How can we rejoice in the Lord when bad things happen to us? (*Phil. 3:1*)
- (6) Did Paul merely “hope” to participate in the resurrection from the dead? Was he unsure of his salvation? (*Phil. 3:11*)
- (7) What was Paul’s antidote for the error of sinless perfectionism?
(*Phil. 3:12-15*)
- (8) How can we learn to be content in every circumstance? (*Phil. 4:12-13*)
- (9) Philippians has been classified as one of Paul’s “Prison Epistles.” Can you find any evidence that this epistle was written in prison?

Colossians

CHAPTER 1

Greetings from Paul

(1) From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, and our brother Timothy.

(2) To God's holy people in Colosse^a who are faithful brothers in union with Christ. May you have grace and peace from God our Father.^b

Paul's Prayers for the Colossians

(3) In our prayers for you, we are always giving thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.^c (4) For we have heard about your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all of God's holy people. (5) Your faith and love stem from the hope that is reserved for you in heaven. You have already heard about this hope in the good news—the message of truth (6) that has come to you. All over the world, this good news is producing fruit and spreading, just as it has among you since the day you heard about God's grace and became aware of its true meaning.

(7) You learned about the good news from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on our^d behalf, (8) and he has informed us of your love, which is a gift of the Spirit.

(9) This is why, from the day we first heard about you, we have always been praying for you and asking God to fill you with a knowledge of His will by giving you every kind of spiritual wisdom and insight. (10) We want your lifestyle to be worthy of the Lord. Then your lives will produce all kinds of good deeds, and you will grow in your knowledge of God as you try to please Him in every way.

(11) Now since you are being strengthened with all the power that comes from His glorious might, we are praying that you will endure everything with patience and joy, (12) and that you will continue giving thanks to the Father, Who qualified you^e to share in the inheritance of His holy people in the realm of light. (13) For He rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of His dear Son, (14) in Whom we have redemption^f—the forgiveness of sins!

The Supremacy of Christ

(15) Christ is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn^g over all creation. (16) For all things in heaven and earth were created by^h Him. He created things that are visible and invisible, whether they are thrones or dominions, rulers or authorities. Everything was created through Him and for Him. (17) He existed before anything else, and all things find their existence in Him. (18) And He is the Head of the church, which is His body. He is the Beginning—the Firstborn from the dead. So He has first place in everything.

(19) For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Christ. (20) And through Him, God has reconciled everything in earth and heaven to Himself. God did this by making peace through the blood of Christ that was shed on the cross.

(21) At one time, you were strangers to God, and because of your evil deeds, you were His enemies in heart and mind. (22) But now Christ has reconciled you by dying in His physical body.ⁱ And as a result, He can present you before God as holy, without blemish, and free from accusation.

(23) However, you must remain firmly grounded and steadfast in your faith, without being moved from the hope you gained when you heard the good news. This good news has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and I, Paul, have become its servant.^j

Paul's Ministry

(24) Now I rejoice in my suffering on your behalf. And in my body, I am completing any of Christ's suffering that still needs to be endured on behalf of His body, the church. (25) I became its servant when God gave me this responsibility of making His word fully known^k to you.

(26) For God's word contains the mystery^l that was hidden for ages and generations, but has now been revealed to His holy people. (27) God wanted them to make the glorious wealth of this mystery known among the Gentiles. And this is the mystery: Christ is among^m you—the hope of glory.

(28) We continue to proclaim Him, warning and teaching everyoneⁿ with all wisdom, so that in union with Christ, we can present everyone as complete. (29) It is toward this goal that I keep toiling, as I wrestle like an athlete with all His energy that so powerfully works in me.

^a *Colosse* was a city that was located in the Lycus River valley, in western Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). It should be noted that Philemon (to whom Paul addressed an epistle) was a prominent member of the Colossian church. ^b Some manuscripts read *from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ*. ^c Some manuscripts read *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. ^d Some manuscripts read *your*. ^e Some manuscripts read *us*. ^f Some manuscripts read *we have redemption through His blood*. ^g When it is applied to Christ, the term *Firstborn* never indicates that His divine nature had a beginning. Instead, the term implies that Christ is first in rank. ^h Or *in* ⁱ Some manuscripts read *But now you have been reconciled by Christ's death in His physical body*. ^j Or minister—see also verse 25. ^k The meaning of the Greek is uncertain. ^l The Greek term that has been translated *mystery* in verses 26-27 refers to a special truth which God has revealed to Christians. ^m Or *in* ⁿ The Greek term that has been translated *everyone* in verse 28 is gender inclusive.

CHAPTER 2

(1) I want you to know how much I am struggling for you, for the people of Laodicea,^a and for all who have not met me personally. (2) I want them to be encouraged in their hearts and instructed^b in love. Then they will have all the wealth that comes from a confident understanding and recognition of Christ. He is God's mystery,^c (3) and all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Him. (4) I am saying this to make sure that no one deceives you with persuasive arguments. (5) For even though I am absent in the body, I am with you in the spirit. And I am delighted to see how disciplined and firm your faith in Christ is.

(6) Now just as you accepted Christ Jesus as Lord, you must continue to live in union with Him. (7) For you have been firmly rooted in Christ, and you are being built up in Him and established in the faith you were taught. And all the while, you are overflowing with thanksgiving.

A Warning about False Teachers

(8) So see to it that no one captivates you through empty philosophy that is geared for deception. This kind of speculation is based on human^d tradition and worldly principles,^e instead of on Christ. (9) For in Christ, all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form. (10) And you are complete in your union with Christ, Who is the Head over every angelic^f ruler and authority.

(11) Moreover, you were circumcised in your union with Christ, and this was not accomplished by human hands. No, your sinful nature was disarmed by the circumcision that Christ performed. (12) For you were buried with Him in baptism, and you were raised with Him through the faith that God produced—the same God Who raised Him from the dead!

(13) Although you were dead because of your transgressions and your uncircumcised sinful nature, God made us^g alive with Christ when He forgave all our^h transgressions. (14) God did this by blotting out the record of sins that was listed against us, with its hostile decrees that were aimed directly at us. He took this record away by nailing it to the cross. (15) And after He had disarmed the angelic rulers and authorities, He exposed them to public shame when He led them in His victory parade in Christ.ⁱ

(16) So don't let anyone judge you in your eating and drinking, or in regard to a festival, new moon celebration, or Sabbath. (17) These are a shadowy outline^j of things to come, but the true reality is found in Christ. (18) Don't let anyone who delights in fake humility and angel worship cheat you out of your prize. Such a person talks endlessly about what he has seen.^k But his sinful mind is making him proud for no reason at all, (19) and he is not holding on to the Head. And yet it is because of the Head that the entire body (which is supported and held together by

its ligaments and sinews) continues to grow with a growth that comes from God.

(20) Now since you died with Christ to worldly principles, why are you living as if you still belong to the world? Why do you keep submitting to its regulations: (21) “Don’t handle this! Don’t taste that! Don’t touch the other!”? (22) Rules about “this,” “that,” and “the other” are all destined to perish with use. For they are based on human commandments and teachings. (23) These rules really do appear to be wise, with their forced piety, fake humility, and severe bodily discipline. But they are worthless in our struggle against sinful indulgence.

^a *Laodicea* was located about ten miles from Colosse. It should be noted that the church in Laodicea was one of the seven churches that are mentioned in the book of Revelation. ^b Or *united* ^c The Greek term that has been translated *mystery* refers to a special truth which God has revealed to Christians. ^d The Greek term that has been translated *human* in verses 8 and 22 is gender inclusive. ^e Or *the elemental spirits of the universe*—see also verse 20. ^f Although the word *angelic* does not appear in the original text, it has been added for clarification. See also verse 15. ^g Some manuscripts read *you*. ^h Some manuscripts read *your*. ⁱ Or *He exposed them to public shame by triumphing over them in the cross*. The meaning of the Greek is uncertain. ^j Literally, *a shadow* ^k Some manuscripts read *Such a person talks endlessly about what he has not seen*.

CHAPTER 3

Continue to Seek the Things That Are Above

(1) Therefore, since you were raised with Christ, continue to seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. (2) Keep your focus on those things and not on earthly things. (3) For you died, and in your union with God, your life is hidden with Christ. (4) And when Christ (Who is your^a Life) appears, you will appear with Him in glory.

Your New Life in Christ

(5) So put to death the earthly things in your nature—sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry. (6) Because of these sins, God’s holy anger is coming on the people who are disobedient.^b (7) And you behaved the same way when you were living among them. (8) But now you must get rid of all these things—anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy talk. (9) Stop lying to one another, for you have disarmed the old nature^c with its practices. (10) And you have clothed yourselves with the new nature, which is constantly being renewed in knowledge—so it can resemble its Creator. (11) Wherever this occurs, there is no longer Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian,^d

slave, or free. But Christ is everything, and He lives in^c all of you!

(12) Therefore, as God's chosen people who are holy and loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. (13) Make it your practice to accept one another and forgive one another—if you have a complaint against anyone. For you must forgive others as the Lord^d forgave you. (14) Above all, put on love, which binds everything together in complete unity.

(15) Now as members of one body, you were called to peace. So let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, and always be thankful. (16) Let Christ's^e word dwell richly among you. And with all the wisdom it gives you, continue teaching and counseling one another as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with grateful hearts to God.^h (17) Whatever you say or do, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, as you keep giving thanks to God the Fatherⁱ through Him.

Counsel for Christian Households

(18) Wives, submit to your husbands. For this is appropriate in your union with the Lord. (19) Husbands, love your wives, and don't be harsh with them.

(20) Children, obey your parents in everything. For this is pleasing to the Lord. (21) Fathers, don't make your children bitter,^j or they will lose their motivation.

(22) Slaves, obey your human masters in everything. Don't try to gain their favor by obeying them only when you are being watched. But serve them with sincere hearts, out of reverence for the Lord. (23) Whatever you do, work at it with all your hearts, as if you are doing it for the Lord and not for human beings.^k (24) After all, you know that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward. So it is really the Lord Christ you are serving. (25) Remember—the person who does wrong will be repaid for the wrong he has done, and God does not show favoritism!

^a Some manuscripts read *our*. ^b Some manuscripts omit *on the people who are disobedient*. ^c Literally, *the old person*—the Greek term is gender inclusive. ^d The Scythians were a people who lived north and east of the Black and Caspian Seas. Among the Greeks, they were regarded as extreme barbarians. ^e Or *among*. ^f Some manuscripts read *as Christ*, while other manuscripts read *as God*. ^g Some manuscripts read *the Lord's*, while other manuscripts read *God's*. ^h Some manuscripts read *to the Lord*. ⁱ Some manuscripts read *to God and the Father*. ^j Some manuscripts read *don't make your children angry*. ^k The Greek term that has been translated *human beings* is gender inclusive.

CHAPTER 4

(1) Masters, be just and fair in the way you treat your slaves. For you are aware that you also have a Master in heaven.

Further Instructions

(2) Be persistent in prayer, with alert minds and thankful hearts. (3) And continue to pray for us—that God will open a door for our message and give us opportunities to speak about the mystery^a of Christ, for which I am in chains. (4) Keep praying that I will speak about it as clearly as I should.

(5) Be sure to show unwavering wisdom in your conduct toward people outside the church, as you make the most of every opportunity. (6) Always speak your words graciously, and season them with salt.^b For then you will know how to answer everyone.

Final Greetings

(7) Tychicus, a dear brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in his union with the Lord, will tell you everything about me. (8) I am sending him to you with a specific purpose—to let you know how we are doing and to encourage you. (9) He is coming with Onesimus,^c that faithful and dear brother who is part of your congregation, and they will tell you everything that is happening here.

(10) Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you greetings, and so does Mark,^d the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions to welcome Mark if he comes your way.)

(11) Jesus,^e who is called Justus, also sends you greetings. (These are the only Jews who are working with me for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me.)

(12) Epaphras, who is part of your congregation and a servant of Christ Jesus,^f sends you greetings. In his prayers, he is always agonizing for you. He wants you to be mature and fully confident of God's entire will. (13) I can testify that he has endured great hardship^g for you and for the people in Laodicea and Hieropolis.^h

(14) Our dear friend Luke,ⁱ the doctor, sends you greetings, and so does Demas. (15) I send my greetings to the brothers in Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church that meets in her house.^j

(16) After this letter has been read in your presence, have it read in the Laodicean church. And make sure you read the letter from Laodicea.^k (17) Tell Archippus^l to complete the work he undertook in the Lord's service.

(18) Here is my greeting in my own handwriting—from Paul. Continue to remember that I am in chains. May grace be with you.^m

^aThe Greek term that has been translated *mystery* refers to a special truth which God has revealed to Christians. ^bSalt makes food pleasant to eat, and it also preserves food in a wholesome, unspoiled state. In the same way, the words of Christians are to be pleasant and wholesome. ^cFor the story of Onesimus, see Philem. 8-21. ^dThis was John Mark, the author of the second Gospel. ^e*Jesus* (the Greek transliteration of Joshua) was a common Jewish name in the first century A.D. ^fSome manuscripts omit *Jesus*. ^gOr *that he has worked very hard* ^hThe name *Hierapolis* means “holy city.” Hierapolis was also situated in the Lycus River valley, and its Christian congregation was probably established at about the same time as the churches in Colosse and Laodicea. ⁱ*Luke* was the author of the third Gospel and the book of Acts. ^jSome manuscripts read *and to Nymphas and the church that meets in his house*. ^kThis may have been the epistle that is commonly known as Ephesians. See the endnote for Eph. 1:1. ^l*Archippus* was probably Philemon’s son. See Philem. 2. ^mSome manuscripts conclude with the word *Amen*.

STUDY GUIDE

- (1) How does the cross of Christ bring peace and reconciliation? (*Col. 1:20*)
- (2) How does the death of Christ enable us to be “holy, without blemish, and free from accusation” before God? (*Col. 1:22*)
- (3) How could Paul say that the “good news has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven?” Aren’t there people on earth at the present time who have yet to hear the good news? (*Col. 1:23*)
- (4) How could Paul complete the suffering of Christ? (*Col. 1:24*)
- (5) Paul says that the fullness of the Deity lives in Christ. What does this mean? (*Col. 2:9*)
- (6) What is Paul trying to say in Col. 2:13-23? What errors were the false teachers at Colosse promoting?
- (7) How can we keep our focus on things in heaven and not on earthly things? (*Col. 3:1-3*)
- (8) How can the peace of Christ rule in our hearts? (*Col. 3:15*)
- (9) Did Paul promote slavery? Why did he say that slaves should obey their masters? (*Col. 3:22-25*)

(10) How can we be persistent in prayer? (*Col. 4:2*)

(11) Colossians has been classified as one of Paul's "Prison Epistles." Can you find any evidence that this epistle was written in prison?

1 Thessalonians

CHAPTER 1

Greetings from Paul

(1) From Paul, Silas,^a and Timothy.

To the church of the Thessalonians,^b which is in union with God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. May you have grace and peace.^c

The Faith of the Thessalonians

(2) We are always thanking God for each of you as we constantly mention you in our prayers. (3) In the presence of our God and Father, we keep remembering your work, which is the fruit of faith, your toil, which is prompted by love, and your endurance, which results from hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

(4) Brothers who are loved by God, we know that God has chosen you, (5) because our good news^d was conveyed to you not merely with words, but with power, with the Holy Spirit, and with deep conviction. For surely you know what kind of people we were when we arrived among you to help you. (6) As a matter of fact, you became imitators of us and of the Lord, and despite great hardship, you welcomed the message with a joy that found its source in the Holy Spirit. (7) So you became a model for all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.^e

(8) Yes, the Lord's message has sounded out from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place where your faith in God has spread to others. And consequently, we don't need to say anything more. (9) For they keep reporting how you welcomed us and how you turned away from idols to serve a God Who is living and real. (10) They also keep reporting that you are waiting for His Son, Whom He raised from the dead, to return from heaven. I am referring to Jesus, Who rescues us from the holy anger that is coming.

^a Literally, *Silvanus*—*Silvanus* is the Roman form of the more familiar *Silas*.

^b The city of Thessalonica (modern Salonika) was founded in 315 B.C. by Cassander, who served as a general in the army of Alexander the Great and who named it after his wife, Thessalonike. ^c Some manuscripts add *from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ*. ^d Some manuscripts read *the/our good news from God*. ^e *Macedonia* and *Achaia* were Roman provinces that were located in the territory of Greece. See also verse 8.

CHAPTER 2

Paul's Work in Thessalonica

(1) You are aware, brothers, that our visit with you was not wasted effort. (2) As you know, we had already experienced suffering and insults at Philippi.^a But in spite of strong opposition, God gave us the courage to tell you His good news. (3) You can be sure that the appeal we made did not stem from error or false motives, nor was it coupled with deceit. (4) On the contrary, God has entrusted us with the good news because He has tested us, and this is why we go on speaking as we do. We are not people^b pleasers! Instead, we are trying to please God, Who keeps testing our motives.

(5) For as you are aware and as God is our Witness, we did not arrive with flattering words or with a mask to cover our greed. (6) Nor were we seeking praise from human beings—not from you or from anyone else—(7) although as apostles of Christ, we could have made our weight felt. But we were gentle^c among you—like a nursing mother tenderly caring for her children. (8) Our affection for you was so deep that we were glad to provide you not only with God's good news, but with our own lives as well. For you had become very dear to us.

(9) Surely you remember, brothers, how we toiled and struggled! We were working night and day so we wouldn't be a burden to any of you while we proclaimed God's good news to you. (10) You and God are witnesses of how holy, righteous, and blameless our conduct was toward you believers. (11) As you know, we treated each of you the way a father treats his children. (12) We kept imploring, encouraging, and warning you to live lives that are worthy of God, Who is calling^d you into His kingdom and glory.

(13) And we are constantly thanking God for another reason also. When you received God's message, which you heard from us, you did not accept it as a human message. No, you accepted it for what it really is—God's message, which is at work among^e you believers. (14) In fact, brothers, you are like God's churches in Judea that are in union with Christ Jesus. For you suffered the same persecutions from the people of your own country that they suffered from the Jews, (15) who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets,^f and who also drove us out. How displeasing they are to God! They are the enemies of all human beings, (16) because they are trying to hinder us from telling the Gentiles how they can be saved. And as a result, they are keeping the cup of their sins filled at all times. But God's holy anger has caught up with them at last!^g

Paul's Desire to Visit the Thessalonians

(17) Brothers, although we were torn away from you like orphans for a little while (in person, not in affection), we made every effort, with intense longing, to see you again face to face. (18) For we wanted to visit you (I, Paul, tried again and again), but Satan blocked our path. (19) After all, who will be our hope, our joy, and the crown that we boast about in the presence of our Lord Jesus^b at His coming? Won't it be you? (20) Yes, you are our glory and joy!

^a *Philippi* received its name from Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great. It was a leading city in Macedonia and a Roman colony. ^b The Greek term that has been translated *people*, *human beings*, or *human* in verses 4, 6, 13, and 15 is gender inclusive. ^c Some manuscripts read *babies*. ^d Some manuscripts read *Who called*. ^e Or *in* ^f Some manuscripts read *their own prophets*. ^g Or *fully*! ^h Some manuscripts read *Jesus Christ*.

CHAPTER 3

Good News from Timothy

(1) So when we couldn't stand it any longer, we decided to remain in Athens alone, (2) while we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker^a in proclaiming the good news about Christ. We sent him to strengthen you and encourage you in your faith, (3) so that no one would be shaken by these persecutions. For you are well aware that we are destined to experience them. (4) As a matter of fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you ahead of time that we were bound to be persecuted. And as you know, that is what happened.

(5) Now this is why, when I couldn't stand it any longer, I sent Timothy^b to find out about your faith. I was afraid that the tempter had tempted you in some way and that our hard work was wasted effort. (6) But Timothy has just returned from visiting you and has told us the good news about your faith and love. He has also told us that you always have fond memories of us and that you are longing to see us, just as we are longing to see you. (7) So, brothers, in the midst of all our distress and trouble, we were encouraged about you because of your faith. (8) For now we can go on living, since you are standing firm in your union with the Lord!

(9) How can we thank God enough for you and for all the joy we have in His presence because of you? (10) We are praying earnestly night and day that we will be able to see your faces again and revive whatever is lacking in your faith.

(11) Now may our God and Father Himself and our Lord Jesus guide our steps toward you. (12) May the Lord greatly increase your love for one another and for

all people, just as our love for you has increased. (13) And as a result, may you receive the inward strength to be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all His holy ones.^c

^a Some manuscripts read *our brother and God's servant*. ^b Although *Timothy* does not appear in the original text, it has been added for clarification. ^c Some manuscripts conclude with the word *Amen*.

CHAPTER 4

How to Live a God-pleasing Life

(1) Finally, brothers, you received instruction from us as to how you should live to please God, and you really are living that way. But now we are asking you and urging you in the name of the Lord Jesus to follow our instruction even more carefully. (2) For you are acquainted with the instruction we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

(3) Yes, your sanctification is God's will. So you should avoid sexual immorality. (4) Each of you should know how to control his own body with holiness and honor,^a (5) not with lustful passion, like the pagans who don't know God. (6) No one should override his brother's rights or take advantage of him in this matter, because the Lord avenges all these sins, as we have already told you with solemn warnings. (7) For God did not call us to impurity, but to holiness. (8) So the person who rejects our instruction is not rejecting human^b authority, but the authority of God, Who gives you His Holy Spirit.

(9) Now you don't need anyone to write to you about brotherly love. For you have been taught by God to love one another. (10) As a matter of fact, you are extending love to all the brothers throughout Macedonia.^c But we urge you, brothers, to grow in love even more. (11) Make it your goal to live a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you. (12) Then your conduct will win respect from people outside the church, and you won't have to depend on anyone.

The Lord's Coming

(13) Brothers, we want you to be informed about those who are sleeping,^d so you won't grieve like other people who have no hope. (14) For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, we also believe that in the same way, God will bring those who have fallen asleep as Christians with Jesus.^e (15) Yes, we are telling you this by the authority of the Lord's own word: We who are living and are left when the Lord comes will have no advantage at all over those who have fallen asleep.

(16) For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the archangel's voice, and with God's trumpet call. And those who have died in union with Christ will rise first. (17) Then we who are living and are left will be caught up with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord. (18) Therefore, keep encouraging one another with these words!

^a Or *Each of you should know how to obtain a spouse with holiness and honor*; ^b The Greek term that has been translated *human* is gender inclusive. ^c *Macedonia* was a Roman province on the northern fringe of Greece. ^d For Paul, *sleep* was a euphemism for death. See also verses 14 and 15. ^e Or *God (working through Jesus) will bring those who have fallen asleep with Him*. Although the meaning of verse 14 is obscure, Paul seems to be saying that just as God brought Jesus forth from the grave, in the same way, He will bring dead Christians forth from the grave along with Jesus.

CHAPTER 5

The Timing of Christ's Coming

(1) Now, brothers, we don't need to write to you about times and dates. (2) For you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. (3) When people are saying, "There is peace and security," destruction will come on them as suddenly as birth pains come on a pregnant woman, and there will be no possibility of escape!

(4) But, brothers, you are not in darkness. So that day should not surprise you like a thief would. (5) For you are all children of light and day. We don't belong to night and darkness. (6) So then, we should not be sleeping like other people are. Instead, we should stay awake and keep our senses. (7) After all, people who are sleeping do their sleeping at night. And people who get drunk, get drunk at night. (8) But since we belong to the day, we should keep our heads level by putting on the breastplate of faith and love,^a with the hope of salvation as a helmet.^b

(9) For God has not destined us to suffer His holy anger, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. (10) He died on our behalf, so that whether we stay awake or are sleeping,^c we can live with Him. (11) Therefore, keep encouraging one another and building one another up, just as you are already doing.

Further Instructions

(12) Brothers, we are asking you to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who direct^d you in your union with the Lord, and who counsel you. (13) Always give them the highest esteem and affection for their work. And continue to be at peace with one another.

(14) Now we are urging you, brothers, to counsel those who are idle, to comfort those who are depressed, to support those who are weak, and to be very patient with everyone. (15) See to it that no one pays back evil for evil. But always try to be good to one another and to everyone else. (16) Always be joyful. (17) Keep praying without interruption. (18) Keep giving thanks in every circumstance. For this is God's will for you in your union with Christ Jesus. (19) Don't quench the Spirit. (20) Don't treat prophecies with contempt. (21) But make it your practice to test everything and to hold on to what is good. (22) Keep avoiding every kind of evil.

Benediction

(23) Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you in every way. May your entire being—spirit, life, and body—be preserved in a blameless state at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(24) The One Who is calling you is faithful, and He will accomplish this!

Final Greeting

(25) Brothers, keep praying for us!^e (26) Be sure to greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. (27) And I am putting you under a solemn obligation before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers.

(28) May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.^f

^a An allusion to Isa. 59:17 ^b Another allusion to Isa. 59:17 ^c Paul is referring to two possibilities for Christians—remaining alive until Christ's second advent or dying before He comes. ^d Or *protect* ^e Some manuscripts read *keep praying for us as well!* ^f Some manuscripts conclude with the word *Amen*.

STUDY GUIDE

- (1) How can we experience joy that finds its source in the Holy Spirit?
(*1 Thess. 1:6*)
- (2) What happened to Paul and Silas at Philippi? (*Acts 16:16-40; 1 Thess. 2:2*)
- (3) How can we avoid being people pleasers? (*1 Thess. 2:4*)
- (4) In what sense were Paul and Silas torn away like orphans from the Thessalonians? (*Acts 17:1-10; 1 Thess. 2:17*)
- (5) Is Christ's return going to be a literal event? Will we see Him and hear Him?
(*1 Thess. 4:16*)
- (6) Do you dread Christ's second advent, or does the prospect of His return encourage you? (*1 Thess. 4:18*)
- (7) How can we avoid quenching the Spirit? (*1 Thess. 5:19*)
- (8) How is it possible to treat prophecies with contempt? (*1 Thess. 5:20*)
- (9) How can we test prophecies? (*1 Thess. 5:21*)
- (10) Do you think God still has prophets today?

2 Thessalonians

CHAPTER 1

Greetings from Paul

(1) From Paul, Silas,^a and Timothy.

To the church of the Thessalonians,^b which is in union with God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (2) May you have grace and peace from God the Father^c and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Reasons for Giving Thanks

(3) We are always obligated to thank God for you, brothers. This is the proper thing to do, because your faith is growing beyond measure, and the love that all of you have for each other is increasing. (4) So we keep boasting in God's churches about your endurance and faith amid all the persecutions and troubles you are going through. (5) These things are proof that God's judgment is just, and as a result, you will be counted worthy of His kingdom, for which you are suffering.

Judgment at Christ's Coming

(6) Yes, it is just for God to balance the ledger by sending trouble on those who are troubling you, (7) and relief to all of us who are being troubled. God will do this when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels (8) in flaming fire. Then God will punish those who don't acknowledge Him and who refuse to obey the good news about our Lord Jesus. (9) They will suffer the penalty of eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord and from His glorious strength. (10) This will happen on the day when He comes to be praised by His holy ones and to be wondered at by all believers. And you will be among them because you have believed our testimony.

(11) This is why we are always praying for you—that our God will count you worthy of His calling, and that through His power, every good desire and faithful deed will be brought to fulfillment. (12) In this way, the name of our Lord Jesus will be praised among you. And in keeping with the grace of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ,^d you will receive praise in your union with Him.^e

^a Literally, *Silvanus*—*Silvanus* is the Roman form of the more familiar *Silas*.

^b The city of Thessalonica (modern Salonika) was founded in 315 B.C. by Cassander, who served as a general in the army of Alexander the Great and who named it after his wife, Thessalonike. ^c Some manuscripts read *God our Father*. ^d Or *our God and the Lord Jesus Christ*, ^e Or *the name of our Lord Jesus will be praised by you and you by Him, in keeping with the grace of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ*.

CHAPTER 2

The Coming of the Lawless One

(1) Now brothers, about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to meet Him—we are asking you (2) not to suddenly lose your senses or become alarmed by some prophecy, message, or letter, supposedly from us, which claims that the day of the Lord has already arrived.

(3) Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come until the falling away^a occurs and the man of lawlessness,^b the son of destruction, is revealed. (4) He will make it his practice to oppose and exalt himself over every so-called god or object of worship.^c And it follows that he will take his seat in God's sanctuary and proclaim himself to be God.

(5) Don't you remember that I used to tell you these things when I was still with you? (6) And you know what is restraining him until his revelation at the appointed time. (7) For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work, but the one^d who is restraining it will continue to do so until he is removed from the scene. (8) Then the lawless one will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus^e will eliminate him with the breath of His mouth and overthrow him with the radiance of His coming.

(9) The coming of the lawless one will be produced by Satan's energy—with all kinds of miracles, signs, and lying wonders, (10) and with every type of wickedness that deceives those who are perishing. They will perish because they did not love the truth that could save them. (11) Consequently, God will send them a powerful delusion that will lead them to believe the Lie.^f (12) Then all those who have not believed the truth, but have delighted in wickedness, will be condemned.

God Chose You

(13) But we are always obligated to thank God for you, brothers who are loved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits for salvation^g through the sanctification that the Spirit produces and through faith in the truth. (14) God called you to salvation through our good news—so you could gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (15) Therefore, brothers, continue to stand firm. Maintain your hold on the traditions you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.

(16) Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, Who loved us and by His grace gave us eternal encouragement^h and good hope, (17) encourageⁱ you inwardly and strengthen you to do and to say everything that is good.

^a Or *the rebellion* ^b Some manuscripts read *the man of sin*. ^c An allusion to Dan. 11:36-37 ^d The identity of this restrainer has often been debated. Many expositors believe that Paul had the Holy Spirit in mind. ^e Some manuscripts omit *Jesus*. ^f The worship of this false christ in place of the true Christ is the ultimate Lie. ^g Some manuscripts read *because from the beginning, God chose you for salvation*. ^h Or *eternal comfort* ⁱ Or *comfort*

CHAPTER 3

Paul's Request for Prayer

(1) Finally, brothers, continue to pray for us. Pray that the Lord's message will spread rapidly and receive honor, just as it did among you. (2) Pray also that we will be rescued from perverted and evil people.^a For not everyone is trustworthy.^b (3) But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.

(4) In our union with the Lord, we are confident about you—that you are following our instructions and will continue to do so. (5) May the Lord guide your hearts into love for Him and into patient endurance for Christ.^c

Follow Our Example

(6) Now brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are commanding you to stay away from any brother who is living an idle life that does not agree with the tradition that all the brothers received from us.^d (7) For you are aware that you need to follow our example.

We didn't live idle lives when we were with you, (8) nor did we accept free food from anyone. On the contrary, we were working night and day in toil and drudgery, so we wouldn't be a burden to any of you. (9) Yes, we had a right to your support, but we wanted to present ourselves as a model for you to follow. (10) In fact, when we were with you, we gave you this directive: "If anyone doesn't want to work, he shouldn't eat."

(11) We keep hearing that some of you are living idle lives. Instead of being busy at your work, you are busybodies. (12) So we are commanding and imploring such people by the Lord Jesus Christ to work quietly and earn their own living. (13) And as for you, brothers, don't lose your enthusiasm for doing what is right.

(14) Now if anyone does not obey the message that we are conveying through this letter, mark him well and have nothing to do with him—so he will feel ashamed. (15) Don't regard him as an enemy, but counsel him as a brother.

Concluding Remarks

(16) May the Lord of peace Himself give you peace at all times and in every way. May the Lord be with all of you.

(17) Here is my greeting in my own handwriting—from Paul. This is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. It is the way I write. (18) May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you.^e

^a The Greek term that has been translated *people* is gender inclusive. ^b Or *not everyone has faith*. ^c Or *into His love and into the patient endurance of Christ*. ^d Some manuscripts read *the tradition you received from us*. ^e Some manuscripts conclude with the word *Amen*.

STUDY GUIDE

(1) Are we suffering for God's kingdom today? Will we be counted worthy of His kingdom? (*2 Thess. 1:5*)

(2) Who is the man of lawlessness? (*2 Thess. 2:3-4; 8-10*)

(3) Who is the one that restrains the coming of the man of lawlessness? Do you think Paul had the Holy Spirit in mind? (*2 Thess. 2:6-7*)

(4) How can we avoid being deceived? (*2 Thess. 2:9-12*)

(5) What does it mean to be chosen for salvation? How many people has God chosen? (*2 Thess. 2:13*)

(6) Why is work important? (*2 Thess. 3:6-12*)

(7) Why do you think Paul put so much emphasis on writing his greeting with his own hand? (*2 Thess. 3:17*)

1 Timothy

CHAPTER 1

Greetings from Paul

(1) From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the directive of God our Savior and Christ Jesus our Hope.

(2) To Timothy, my genuine child in the faith. May you have grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and from Christ Jesus our Lord.

A Warning about False Teachers

(3) When I was on my way into Macedonia,^a I encouraged you to remain in Ephesus.^b That way, you could instruct certain people not to teach false doctrines (4) and not to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies.^c These things lead to useless speculation instead of God's saving plan that finds its basis in faith. (5) But your instruction has love as its goal—a love that flows from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and a sincere faith. (6) Some people have missed the mark and have turned away to empty chatter. (7) They want to be teachers of the law, but they don't understand what they are talking about or what they are affirming so confidently.

The Proper Use of the Law

(8) Now we know that the law is good if it is used in a lawful way. (9) But we also know that the law was not enacted for righteous people. Instead, it was enacted for outlaws and rebels, for wicked people and sinners, for those who are profane and worldly, for those who murder their fathers, mothers, or other people, (10) for those who are sexually immoral, for practicing homosexuals, for slave traders, liars, and false witnesses—in fact, for those who do anything that is contrary to wholesome teaching. (11) This kind of teaching agrees with the glorious good news that came from the blessed^d God and that was entrusted to me.

Christ Jesus Came to Save Sinners

(12) I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, Who strengthened me and sent me into ministry because He considered me faithful. (13) Although I was once a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a violent person,^e I received mercy because, in my unbelief, I acted out of ignorance. (14) Yes, the grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with faith and love that find their source in Christ Jesus.

(15) This statement is trustworthy, and it deserves to be fully accepted: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—and I am the worst of them! (16) But that is why I received mercy. I received it so that Christ Jesus could display all of His patience in me—the worst of sinners—by making me an example to those

who would believe in Him and gain eternal life.

(17) Now to the King of the ages—the immortal, invisible, and only God^f—be honor and glory forever and ever! Amen.

The Good Fight

(18) Timothy, my child, I am entrusting you with this instruction, in keeping with the prophecies that led me to you. And with them in mind, you can continue to fight the good fight, (19) while you cling to faith and a clear conscience. Some people have ignored their consciences and have made a shipwreck of their faith. (20) Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander,^g whom I handed over to Satan—to be trained not to blaspheme.

^a *Macedonia* was a Roman province on the northern fringe of Greece. ^b *Ephesus* was a famous port city on the west coast of Asia Minor and the capital of the Roman province of Asia. ^c Paul may be referring to allegorical interpretations of scripture that were invented by Jewish rabbis and that were often coupled with attempts to trace one's family back to some famous ancestor. It is also possible that Paul had some Gnostic practice in mind. ^d Or *happy* ^e Or *an arrogant person*, ^f Some manuscripts read *only wise God*. ^g *Hymenaeus* was probably the same person Paul mentions in 2 Tim. 2:17, but nothing more is known about him, except that he was a false teacher. Nothing more is known about *Alexander* either. Although attempts have been made to identify him with the metalworker who was named Alexander (see 2 Tim. 4:14), the fact that Alexander was a very common Greek name makes this unlikely.

CHAPTER 2

The Importance of Prayer

(1) So, first of all, I urge you to offer petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving on behalf of all people^a—(2) on behalf of kings and everyone in authority—so we can live peaceful and quiet lives, with complete reverence and dignity. (3) This is good, and it pleases God our Savior, (4) Who wants all people to be saved and to come to a full knowledge of the truth.

(5) For there is one God, and there is also one Mediator between God and human beings—the Human Being, Christ Jesus. (6) He gave Himself as a ransom on behalf of all people—which served as a witness at its own appointed time.

(7) Now this is why I was appointed as a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of faith and truth to the Gentiles. I am speaking the truth.^b I am not lying. (8) So I want men everywhere to pray, as they lift up holy hands without anger or

argument.

How Christian Women Should Behave

(9) I also want women to dress in respectable attire, with modesty and good taste—not with braided hair, gold, pearls, or expensive clothes. (10) Instead, they should adorn themselves with good deeds that are appropriate for women who claim to have reverence for God.

(11) A woman should learn quietly, with complete submission. (12) I do not allow a woman to teach or to have authority over a man. Instead, she should be quiet. (13) For Adam was formed first, and then Eve. (14) And it wasn't Adam who was deceived. It was the woman who was completely deceived and who became a transgressor. (15) But she and all women^c will be saved through the birth of her Child^d—if they continue to practice faith, love, and holiness, along with good judgment.

^a The Greek term that has been translated *people, Human Being, or human beings* in verses 1, 4, and 5 is gender inclusive. ^b Some manuscripts read *I am speaking the truth in my union with Christ*. ^c Although the words *and all women* do not appear in the original text, they are implied by the pronoun *they* that appears later in the verse. ^d Or *will be saved through the bearing of children*—the meaning of the Greek is uncertain. If Paul intended to refer to the birth of the Christ Child, he seems to be alluding to Gen. 3:15 and Isa. 9:6.

CHAPTER 3

Qualifications for Church Leaders

(1) Here is a trustworthy statement: If anyone has his heart set on being a supervisor,^a he is desiring a good work. (2) But the supervisor must be blameless. He must be the husband of one wife and must live an abstinent lifestyle. He must be sensible,^b respectable, hospitable to strangers, and good at teaching. (3) He must not linger around wine^c or be quick to fight. Instead, he must be gentle, peaceful, and free from the love of money. (4) He must manage his own family well and keep his children under control, while maintaining complete dignity.^d (5) After all, if someone doesn't know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?

(6) He must not be a new convert, or he may become swollen with pride and fall under the same verdict as the devil. (7) He must also receive good testimony from people outside the church, or he may fall into disgrace and be caught in the

devil's trap.

(8) Deacons, likewise, must be dignified. They must not be two-faced; they must not be addicted to large amounts of wine, and they must not be greedy for money.

(9) They must hold firmly to the mystery^e of the faith with clear consciences. (10) Let prospective deacons be tested first, and if they are free from accusation, let them serve.

(11) Women^f also must be dignified. They must avoid gossip; they must live an abstinent lifestyle, and they must be faithful in every way.

(12) A deacon must be the husband of one wife and must manage his children and his own family well. (13) As a matter of fact, deacons with a good record of service are acquiring an excellent reputation for themselves and great confidence in their faith in Christ Jesus.

The Great Mystery of Our Faith

(14) I hope to visit you soon, but I am writing you these instructions (15) so that, if I am delayed, you will know how a person should conduct himself in God's family, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth. (16) By common confession, the mystery of our faith is great:

He^g was revealed in flesh.
He was declared righteous by the Spirit.
He was seen by angels.
He was proclaimed among the Gentiles.
He was believed on in the world,
and was taken up in glory.^h

^a Traditionally, *bishop*—in the New Testament church, the terms *elder* and *supervisor* (*bishop*) had the same meaning. Both terms were commonly used to refer to the pastors of local congregations. ^b Or *self-controlled*. ^c The Greek term that has been translated *linger around wine* has several nuances of meaning. It can denote intoxication or addiction to wine. However, it can also refer to attendance at drinking parties or other events where wine flows freely. ^d Or *and keep his children submissive and completely dignified*. ^e The Greek term that has been translated *mystery* refers to a special truth which God has revealed to Christians. See also verse 16. ^f Or *Wives*—it is uncertain whether Paul is referring to deaconesses or to the wives of deacons. ^g Some manuscripts read *God*. ^h This seems to be an early Christian hymn or confession of faith.

CHAPTER 4

Future Apostasy

(1) The Spirit is plainly saying that in later times, some people will abandon the faith, to follow deceiving spirits and demonic teachings. (2) They will be led astray by hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared with a branding iron.^a

(3) These liars will forbid marriage and demand that certain foods not be eaten—foods that God created to be shared with thanksgiving by believers who have a full knowledge of the truth. (4) For everything God created is good, and no food that is received with thanksgiving should be thrown away. (5) After all, it is consecrated by God’s word and by prayer.

(6) If you continue to point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good servant^b of Christ Jesus, who is nurtured by the principles of the faith and the sound teaching you have followed.

Further Instructions for Timothy

(7) Have nothing to do with profane myths and old wives’ tales. Instead, keep training yourself for godly living. (8) Physical training has a little value, but godliness is valuable in every way because it holds a promise for both the present life and the life to come. (9) This statement is trustworthy, and it deserves to be completely accepted. (10) In fact, this is why we are toiling and struggling^c—because we we have put our hope in the living God, Who is the Savior of all people,^d especially of believers.

(11) Keep insisting on these things in your teaching, (12) and don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young. But be a model for the believers in your speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity. (13) Until I arrive, keep devoting yourself to the public reading of scripture, to encouraging the believers, and to teaching. (14) Don’t neglect your spiritual gift, which you received through a prophetic message when the council of elders laid their hands on you.

(15) Continue to put these things into practice and devote yourself to them, so that everyone will see your progress. (16) Pay constant attention to your life and teaching. Keep doing these things, because if you do, you will save both yourself and those who listen to you.

^aA seared conscience is insensitive to right and wrong. Also, a branding iron is used to impress a visible mark of ownership, which may suggest that the consciences of these false teachers are marked as belonging to Satan. It is possible that Paul had both of these ideas in mind. ^b Or *minister* ^c Some

manuscripts read *this is why we are toiling and suffering insults*.^d The Greek term that has been translated *people* is gender inclusive.

CHAPTER 5

How to Treat Fellow Believers

(1) Don't rebuke an older man harshly, but keep encouraging him as if he were your father. Treat younger men like brothers, (2) older women like mothers, and younger women like sisters—with complete purity.

(3) Be sure to honor widows who have no families.^a (4) But if a widow has children or grandchildren, they should first learn to practice godly devotion toward their own families by repaying their parents and grandparents. For this is pleasing in the sight of God.

(5) Now the widow who has been left alone without a family^b has put her hope in God, and she persists in her prayers and petitions night and day. (6) But the widow who is living a self-indulgent lifestyle has already died spiritually,^c even though she is alive.

(7) Continue to instruct the people about these matters, so they can be free from blame. (8) If anyone does not provide for his own relatives, especially his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

(9) A widow should only be enrolled on the widows' list if she is at least 60 years old and if she has been the wife of one husband. (10) She should also have a reputation for good deeds, such as raising children, welcoming strangers, washing the feet of God's holy people, helping people who are in distress, and devoting herself to every kind of good work. (11) But younger widows should not be enrolled on the list. For whenever they let their passions lead them away from Christ, they want to get married. (12) And in this way, they bring condemnation on themselves, because they have broken their original pledge.^d (13) At the same time, they also learn to be lazy as they gad about from house to house. Not only that, but they even become gossips and busybodies, talking about things that are inappropriate.

(14) So I want younger widows to get married, have children, manage their homes, and give the enemy no opportunity to engage in slander. (15) For some of these women have already wandered away to follow Satan.

(16) If a female believer^e has relatives who are widows, she should help them and not force the church to be burdened with them. Then the church will be able to

help widows who have no families.^f

(17) Elders who are good leaders should be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at speaking and teaching. (18) After all, the scripture says, “You must not muzzle an ox that is treading out the grain,”^g and “A worker deserves his pay.”^h (19) Don’t accept an accusation against an elder unless it is supported by two or three witnesses. (20) But as for those who make a practice of sinning, rebuke them publicly, so that the rest of the believers will have a fear of sin.

(21) In the presence of God, Christ Jesus, and the chosen angels, I solemnly warn you to follow these instructions without showing prejudice or practicing favoritism. (22) Don’t be quick to lay your hands on anyone, and don’t participate in the sins of others. Continue to keep yourself pure.

(23) Stop drinking only water. Instead, use a little wine because of your weak stomach and frequent illnesses.

(24) The sins of some peopleⁱ are obvious because they go ahead of them to judgment. But the sins of others follow them there. (25) In a similar way, good deeds are also obvious, and even the ones that aren’t obvious can’t remain hidden.

^a Literally, *widows who are truly widows*. ^b Literally, *the woman who is truly a widow and has been left alone* ^c Although the word *spiritually* does not appear in the original text, it has been added for clarification. ^d It seems that a widow was required to pledge not to marry again when she was enrolled on the widows’ list. ^e Some manuscripts read *a male or female believer*. ^f Literally, *help those who are truly widows*. ^g Deut. 25:4 ^h Luke 10:7 ⁱ The Greek term that has been translated *people* is gender inclusive.

CHAPTER 6

Slaves and Masters

(1) Those who are under the yoke of slavery should regard their masters as worthy of complete honor, so that the name of God and Christian teaching will not be slandered. (2) And slaves who have believing masters should not be disrespectful to them because they are brothers. Instead, they should provide them with even better service, because those who receive the benefit of their work are fellow believers whom they love.

Now you must continue to teach and to urge these duties.

Godliness and Contentment

(3) If anyone is teaching false doctrines and is refusing to agree with the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and godly teaching, (4) he has become arrogant and understands nothing. In fact, he has an unhealthy passion for arguments and disputes about words, which produce envy, quarreling, slander, evil suspicions, (5) and mutual friction between people^a whose minds have been corrupted and who have been lost to the truth. For they think that godliness is a way to make a profit.^b

(6) Of course, godliness does produce a large profit, but only for those who are content with what they have. (7) For we brought nothing into the world, and^c we can take nothing out of it. (8) So as long as we have food and shelter,^d we should be content. (9) But people who want to get rich keep falling into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that sink them into ruin and destruction. (10) For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, and in their desire for it, some people have wandered away from the faith and have stabbed themselves with many pains.

The Good Fight of Faith

(11) But you, man of God, must continue to flee from these things. Instead, you must make it your practice to pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness. (12) Keep fighting the good fight of faith! Get a firm grip on the eternal life to which you were called and about which you gave a good testimony in the presence of many witnesses.

(13) Now in the sight of God, Who preserves the lives of all creatures, and in the sight of Christ Jesus, Who gave a good testimony before Pontius Pilate, I am instructing you (14) to obey these commandments without fault or failure until our Lord Jesus Christ appears. (15) For in His own time, God will display Him to us. God is the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords. (16) He alone has immortality, and He lives in unapproachable light. No human being has seen Him or can see Him. To Him be honor and eternal power. Amen.

(17) Now as for those who are rich in this present age,^e keep instructing them not to be arrogant and not to put their hope in anything as uncertain as wealth. Instead, they should put their hope in God,^f Who lavishes everything on us for our enjoyment. (18) Tell them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, to be generous, and to be willing to share. (19) In this way, they will store up a treasure for themselves that will provide a good foundation for the future and a firm grip on what is truly life.

(20) Timothy, be sure to guard what has been entrusted to you. Keep avoiding the empty discussions and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge. (21) Although some people claim to have it, they have missed the mark as far as the faith is concerned.

May grace be with all of you.^g

^aThe Greek term that has been translated *people/human being* in verses 5 and 16 is gender inclusive. ^b Some manuscripts add *Stay away from such people!*
^c Some manuscripts read *and it is clear that.* ^d Or *food and clothing.* ^e Or *present world.* ^f Some manuscripts read *the living God.* ^g Some manuscripts conclude with the word *Amen.*

STUDY GUIDE

- (1) What is the real purpose of God's law? (*1 Tim. 1:8-11*)
- (2) What does the fact that Christ came into the world to save sinners mean to you? (*1 Tim. 1:15*)
- (3) Why is Christ's work as Mediator necessary for our salvation? (*1 Tim. 2:5*)
- (4) What is the proper role of women in the church? (*1 Tim. 2:11-15*)
- (5) What does the expression "the husband of one wife" mean? (*1 Tim. 3:2, 12*)
- (6) Who are or were the false teachers who forbid marriage and demand that certain foods not be eaten? (*1 Tim. 4:1-6*)
- (7) How should the church care for its needy members today? (*1 Tim. 5:3-16*)
- (8) Many people today tend to be very materialistic. How can we learn to be content with what we have? (*1 Tim. 6:6-10*)
- (9) What did Paul have in mind when he referred to what is falsely called knowledge? (*1 Tim. 6:20-21*)

2 Timothy

CHAPTER 1

Greetings from Paul

(1) From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, in keeping with the promise of life that is found in Christ Jesus.

(2) To Timothy, my dear child. May you have grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and from Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul's Counsel for Timothy

(3) I am grateful to God (Whom I keep serving with a clear conscience, like my ancestors did) whenever I mention you in my prayers—which is my constant practice, night and day. (4) I recall your tears, and I long to see you—so I can be filled with joy! (5) I am reminded of your sincere faith—a faith that first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice, and I am convinced also lives in you. (6) This is why I am reminding you to rekindle the gift from God that you received when I laid my hands on you. (7) For God did not give us a cowardly spirit, but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-control. (8) So don't be ashamed to testify about our Lord, and don't be ashamed of me, His prisoner. But through the power that comes from God, accept your share of suffering on behalf of the good news.

(9) God saved us and called us to a holy life^a—not because of our works, but because of His own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in our union with Christ Jesus before time began, (10) but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, Who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the good news.

(11) Now I was appointed as a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher^b on account of this good news. (12) And that explains why I am suffering like I am, but I am not ashamed! For I know the One in Whom I have believed, and I am confident that He has the power to guard what He has entrusted to me^c until the last day.^d (13) So keep holding on to the pattern of sound teaching that you heard from me, with the faith and love that are found in Christ Jesus. (14) And through the power of the Holy Spirit Who is living in us, guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you.

News about Paul's Friends

(15) As you are aware, everyone in the province of Asia^e deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes.

(16) May the Lord show mercy to the family of Onesiphorus! For he often cheered me up and was not embarrassed by my chain. (17) On the contrary, when

he was in Rome, he searched eagerly for me and found me. (18) May the Lord enable him to find mercy on the last day!^f (As a matter of fact, you are even better acquainted with all the services he provided in Ephesus^g than I am.)

^a Or *with a holy calling* ^b Some manuscripts read *a teacher of the Gentiles*.

^c Or *what I have entrusted to Him* ^d Literally, *until that day*. ^e *Asia* was a Roman province that was located in what is now western Turkey. ^f Literally, *on that day!* ^g *Ephesus* was a famous port city on the west coast of Asia Minor and the capital of the Roman province of Asia.

CHAPTER 2

A Good Soldier of Christ Jesus

(1) So then, my child, you must continue to obtain your strength from the grace that is found in Christ Jesus. (2) And you must entrust what you heard from me in the presence of many witnesses to faithful people^a who will also be qualified to teach others.

(3) Accept your share of suffering like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. (4) No one who is serving in the army gets entangled in the affairs of everyday life. After all, his goal is to please the officer who enlisted him. (5) And if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he abides by the rules. (6) What is more, the hardworking farmer should be the first person to receive a share of the crops. (7) Keep pondering what I am saying, and the Lord will give you insight into all these matters.

God's Word Has Not Been Chained!

(8) Always remember that according to my good news, Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead and is a Descendant of David.^b (9) I am suffering hardship for this good news—even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word has not been chained! (10) And that explains why I keep enduring everything for the sake of God's chosen people—so they can obtain the salvation that is found in Christ Jesus, along with eternal glory.

(11) This statement is trustworthy:

If we died with Christ,^c
we will also live with Him.
(12) If we keep enduring,
we will also reign with Him.
If we deny Him,
He will also deny us.

(13) If we are unfaithful,
He remains faithful.
For He cannot deny Himself.

A Proven Worker

(14) Keep reminding the people of these things, and warn them before God^d not to quarrel about words. For quarreling doesn't accomplish anything, and it only ruins those who listen to it. (15) Do your best to present yourself to God as a proven worker who has nothing to be ashamed of and who handles the word of truth correctly. (16) But avoid empty discussions, because those who engage in them will advance farther and farther into ungodliness, (17) and what they say will spread like gangrene. Hymenaeus and Philetus^e are part of this group. (18) As far as the truth is concerned, they have missed the mark by claiming that the resurrection has already taken place, and they are undermining the faith of some people.

(19) Nevertheless, God's solid foundation is still standing, and it has been sealed with these inscriptions: "The Lord knows those who belong to Him,"^f and "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord must stay away from wickedness." (20) Now in a large house, there are not only gold and silver utensils, but other utensils that are made of wood and clay. Some are for an honorable purpose, and some are for a dishonorable purpose. (21) So if a person purges his life from these evils that I have mentioned,^g he will be an honorable utensil that is set apart for the Master's use and prepared for every good work. (22) Make it your practice to flee from the wayward desires of youth, and continue to pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace—in company with those who call on the Lord with pure hearts. (23) Have nothing to do with foolish and ignorant debates because you are aware that they breed quarrels, (24) and the Lord's servant should not quarrel. Instead, he should be kind to everyone; he should be good at teaching; he should be willing to suffer wrong, (25) and he should be gentle in correcting his opponents. After all, God could give them repentant hearts and bring them to a full knowledge of the truth. (26) Then they would come to their senses and escape from the devil's trap, even though they had been held by him as living captives to do his will.

^a The Greek term that has been translated *people* is gender inclusive. ^b Literally, *and is of the seed of David*. ^c Literally, *If we died with Him*, ^d Some manuscripts read *before the Lord*. ^e The same *Hymenaeus* is probably mentioned in 1 Tim. 1:20. Nothing more is known of *Philetus*. ^f Num. 16:5 ^g Although the words *evils that I have mentioned* do not appear in the original text, they are implied by the context.

CHAPTER 3

What the Last Days Will Be Like

(1) Now you must realize that in the last days, the times will be dangerous and full of trouble.^a (2) People^b will love themselves and love money. They will be boastful, proud, blasphemous, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, (3) heartless, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, without love for what is good, (4) treacherous, reckless, and haughty. They will love pleasure rather than God. (5) They will maintain an outward appearance of piety but deny its power.

Make it your practice to avoid such people! (6) For they are the type who slip into homes and captivate weak women who are overwhelmed by sins and driven by all kinds of evil desires. (7) Such women are always “learning,” but are never able to arrive at a full knowledge of the truth. (8) And just as Jannes and Jambres^c opposed Moses, so these people keep opposing the truth. For their minds have become depraved, and their faith has failed the test. (9) It is obvious that they won’t get very far because, as in the case of Jannes and Jambres, their foolishness will be plain to everyone.

Stand by What You Have Learned

(10) But you have closely followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, and endurance, (11) as well as the persecutions and sufferings that came my way in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra.^d What persecutions I endured! And yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. (12) As a matter of fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in union with Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (13) But evil people and charlatans will progress from bad to worse as they keep deceiving others and are deceived themselves.

(14) You, however, must stand by what you have learned and have firmly believed, because you know who your teachers were. (15) From your early childhood, you have been acquainted with the holy scriptures that can give you wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (16) Every^e scripture is inspired by God^f and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. (17) So the person who belongs to God can be complete and thoroughly equipped for every kind of good work.

^aThe Greek term suggests two distinct ideas—*danger* and *trouble*. The translation *dangerous and full of trouble* is an attempt to capture both of these ideas. ^bThe Greek term that has been translated *people/person* in verses 2, 8, 13, and 17 is gender inclusive. ^cAccording to an ancient Jewish tradition, these were the names of two of the Egyptian magicians who tried imitate the miracles that God performed through Moses. See Ex. 7:11-12. ^dThese were three cities that Paul

and Barnabas visited on their first missionary journey. See Acts 13:14-14:20. ° Or All ^f Or is God-breathed

CHAPTER 4

Proclaim the Message

(1) In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, Who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of His appearing and His kingdom, I solemnly urge you (2) to proclaim the message. Drive it home, regardless of whether the time is convenient. Correct, rebuke, and encourage, with complete patience and thorough instruction. (3) For a time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, they will surround themselves with a crowd of teachers who will tickle their ears with messages that appeal to their desires. (4) And they will turn away from listening to the truth and turn aside to myths. (5) But as for you, keep a level head in every situation; endure hardship; do the work of an evangelist, and devote yourself fully to your ministry.

Paul's Approaching Death

(6) For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure has arrived. (7) I have fought the good fight! I have finished the race! I have kept the faith! (8) So now the crown of righteousness is in store for me, and the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give it to me on the last day^a—and not only to me, but to all who have longed for His appearing.

Final Instructions

(9) Do your best to visit me soon. (10) For Demas deserted me, because he fell in love with this present world,^b and he went to Thessalonica.^c Crescens went to Galatia^d and Titus to Dalmatia.^e (11) Only Luke is with me. Get Mark^f and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. (12) And as for Tychicus, I sent him to Ephesus.^g (13) When you come, bring the heavy coat that I left in Troas^h with Carpus, and the scrolls, especially the parchments.

(14) Alexander the metalworkerⁱ did me great harm. But the Lord will pay him back for what he did. (15) You also need to be on your guard against him, because he violently opposed our message. (16) When I first had to defend myself, no one supported me. Instead, everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them! (17) But the Lord stood beside me and gave me strength, so that I could finish the proclamation and all the Gentiles could hear it. And I was rescued from the lion's mouth.^j (18) For the Lord will rescue me from every evil plot and bring me safely into His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Final Greetings

- (19) I send my greetings to Priscilla^k and Aquila and the family of Onesiphorus.
- (20) Erastus stayed in Corinth,^l and I left Trophimus in Miletus^m because he was sick. (21) Do your best to come before winter. Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brothers send you greetings.
- (22) May the Lordⁿ be with your spirit. May grace be with all of you.^o

^aLiterally, *on that day* ^bOr *this present age*, ^c*Thessalonica* (modern Salonika) was located in Macedonia about 37 miles west of Apollonia. Cassander, who served as a general in the army of Alexander the Great, founded this city in 315 B.C. and named it after his wife, Thessalonike. ^dIt is uncertain whether Paul is referring to the region of Galatia or the Roman province of Galatia. The Roman province included the region, which was located in central Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), plus additional territory to the south. ^e*Dalmatia* is a region on the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea in what is currently the modern nation of Croatia. ^fThis was John Mark, the author of the second Gospel. ^g*Ephesus* was a famous port city on the west coast of Asia Minor and the capital of the Roman province of Asia. ^h*Troas* was an important port and a Roman colony on the eastern shore of the Aegean Sea. ⁱOr *coppersmith* ^jAn allusion to Ps. 22:21 ^kThe Greek reads *Prisca*, which is a variant of Priscilla. ^l*Corinth* was a major city in southern Greece. It was located on a land bridge (the Isthmus of Corinth) that connects the Greek mainland with the southern peninsula. ^m*Miletus* was an Aegean port that was located about 40 miles south of Ephesus. ⁿSome manuscripts read *the Lord Jesus Christ*. ^oSome manuscripts conclude with the word *Amen*.

STUDY GUIDE

- (1) In what sense was Christ's grace given to us before time began? (*2 Tim. 1:9*)
- (2) In what sense has Christ abolished death? Don't we all eventually die? (*2 Tim. 1:10*)
- (3) Why do you think so many people deserted Paul when he was in prison? (*2 Tim. 1:15; 4:16*)
- (4) What is Paul telling Timothy and us in *2 Tim. 2:3-7*?
- (5) How can we avoid empty discussions? (*2 Tim. 2:16-18*)
- (6) What does it mean to have "an outward appearance of piety but deny its power"? (*2 Tim. 3:5*)

(7) Obviously, Paul believed he was going to die soon. What do we know about Paul's death? (*2 Tim. 4:6-7*)

Titus

CHAPTER 1

Greetings from Paul

(1) From Paul—a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ—sent to promote the faith of God’s chosen people and a full and reverent knowledge of the truth. (2) Our faith and knowledge are grounded in the hope of eternal life, which God, Who never lies, promised before time began. (3) But at His own appointed time, He revealed His word through the proclamation that was entrusted to me by the directive of God our Savior.

(4) To Titus, a genuine son in the faith that we share. May you have grace and peace^a from God the Father and from Christ Jesus our Savior.

Titus’ Work in Crete

(5) I left you behind in Crete to deal with any unfinished business and to appoint elders in every town as I instructed you. (6) A man is acceptable as an elder if he is blameless, if he has only one wife, and if his children are believers who are not accused of wild living or of being unruly.

(7) Since the supervisor^b is God’s manager, he must be blameless. He must not be arrogant or short-tempered. He must not linger around wine^c or be quick to fight or greedy for money.

(8) On the contrary, he must be hospitable to strangers and love what is good. He must make sensible decisions, live a righteous and godly life, and exercise self-control. (9) He must keep a firm hold on the trustworthy message that agrees with our teaching. Then he will be able to encourage others with sound doctrine and correct those who oppose it.

(10) For there are many rebellious people who are empty windbags and deceivers, especially among those who advocate circumcision. (11) Their mouths must be stopped, because they are turning whole families upside down by teaching things that should not be taught—and all for the sake of making money in a shameful way! (12) One of their own Cretan prophets put it this way:

“Always liars, men of Crete,
wicked beasts who live to eat.”^d

(13) How truly he spoke! And this is why you must be severe in correcting them—so they can be sound in their faith (14) and pay no attention to Jewish myths and the commands of people^e who are rejecting the truth. (15) Everything is clean for those who are clean. But nothing is clean for those who are corrupt and unbelieving. For both their minds and their consciences have been corrupted.

(16) They are always claiming to know God, but they keep denying Him by their actions. They are abominable, disobedient, and unqualified for doing anything good.

^a Some manuscripts read *grace, mercy, and peace*. ^b Traditionally, *bishop*—in the New Testament church, the terms *elder* and *supervisor (bishop)* had the same meaning. Both terms were commonly used to refer to the pastors of local congregations. ^c The Greek term that has been translated *linger around wine* has several nuances of meaning. It can denote intoxication or addiction to wine. However, it can also refer to attendance at drinking parties or other events where wine flows freely. ^d A quotation from the Cretan poet Epimenides (6th-5th century B.C.)—it should be noted that these lines also rhyme in Greek. ^e The Greek term that has been translated *people* is gender inclusive.

CHAPTER 2

Instructions for Christian Living

(1) But as for you, always communicate a message that is consistent with sound doctrine. (2) Keep instructing the older men to live an abstinent lifestyle. They must be dignified, sensible,^a and sound in their faith, love, and endurance.

(3) Likewise, keep instructing the older women to be reverent in the way they live. They must not slander other people or be enslaved to large quantities of wine. Instead, they must be good teachers. (4) Then they can train the younger women to be loving wives and mothers, (5) to be sensible and pure, to keep house, practice kindness, and submit to their own husbands. And as a result, no one will show contempt for God's message.

(6) In the same way, keep encouraging the young men to use good judgment^b (7) in every situation, and be a model of upright behavior yourself.^c When you teach, be sure to show integrity and dignity. (8) Proclaim a wholesome message that cannot be condemned, so that any opponent will be put to shame and have nothing evil to say about us.

(9) Slaves must submit to their masters and try to please them in every matter, without talking back to them (10) or stealing from them. Instead, slaves must demonstrate that they can be fully trusted. Then they will add luster to the teaching about God our Savior in everything they do.

(11) For the grace of God that brings salvation has dawned on all people.^d (12) This grace keeps training us to reject impiety and worldly passions, and to live sensible, righteous, and godly lives in this present age, (13) while we are waiting

for the blessed hope—the glorious appearance of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. (14) He gave Himself up on our behalf—to redeem us from all lawlessness and to cleanse us—so we could be His own special people who are eager to do good.

(15) This is your message! So continue to encourage and correct with full authority, and don't let anyone look down on you.

^aOr *self-controlled*—see also verses 5 and 12. ^bOr *to practice self-control* ^cOr *keep encouraging the young men to use good judgment, (7) and in every situation, be a model of upright behavior yourself.* ^dThe Greek term that has been translated *people* is gender inclusive.

CHAPTER 3

(1) Always remind the believers to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to obey them, and to be ready for any good work. (2) They must never slander other people or fight with them. Instead, they must continue to show tolerance and humility to everyone.^a

God's Love for Us

(3) There was once a time when we too were foolish, disobedient, and deluded. We were enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures, and we lived in wickedness and jealousy. We were despicable, and we hated one another.

(4) But when the kindness and generosity of God our Savior dawned on us—(5) this was not because of righteous deeds we had performed, but because of His mercy—He saved us through the Holy Spirit's washing that leads to rebirth and renewal. (6) God lavished the Spirit on us through Jesus Christ our Savior, (7) so we could be justified by His grace and become heirs of the hope of eternal life. (8) This is a trustworthy statement, and I want you to keep affirming these things. Then those who have put their faith in God will devote themselves to good deeds. For these truths are good and helpful to everyone.

(9) But avoid foolish debates, arguments over genealogies, quarrels, and wrangling about the law. For they are useless and empty. (10) After you have issued a first and second warning, steer clear of anyone who promotes divisive teachings. (11) You can be sure that such a person is a warped sinner who is self-condemned.

Final Instructions

(12) As soon as I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to meet me in

Nicopolis,^b because I have decided to spend the winter there. (13) Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos in their travels, and make sure all their needs are met.

(14) Our people must learn to devote themselves to good deeds, so they can provide for real necessities without wasting their lives.

Final Greetings

(15) Everyone with me sends you greetings, and I send my greetings to those who love us as fellow believers. May grace be with all of you.^c

^aThe Greek term that has been translated *everyone/anyone* in verses 2, 8, and 10 is gender inclusive. ^bAlthough a number of cities in the Mediterranean region were named *Nicopolis*, Paul was probably referring to a large city on the western coast of Greece. ^cSome manuscripts conclude with the word *Amen*.

STUDY GUIDE

(1) Paul counsels Titus to correct the Cretans severely. How can we determine when to be gentle with people and when to be severe? Is severity compatible with the love of Christ? (*Titus 1:13-14*)

(2) What does Paul mean when he says that everything is clean for those who are clean, but nothing is clean for those who are corrupt and unbelieving? Is he repeating a cliché that was used by false teachers? (*Titus 1:15*)

(3) What does it mean for a wife to submit to her husband? Is submission the same as obedience? (*Titus 2:5*)

(4) Why didn't Paul condemn slavery more openly? How would the Romans have responded to a blatant condemnation of slavery? What was Paul's opinion of the slave trade? (*1 Tim. 1:9-10; Titus 2:9-10*)

(5) When Paul speaks of "foolish debates, arguments over genealogies, quarrels, and wrangling about the law," what is he alluding to? Do we have similar problems in the Christian Church today? (*Titus 3:9*)

(6) How do good deeds help us provide for real necessities in life? (*Titus 3:14*)

Philemon

Greetings from Paul

(1) From Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and our brother Timothy.

To Philemon, our dear fellow worker, (2) to Apphia, our sister, to Archippus, our fellow soldier,^a and to the church that meets in your house. (3) May you have grace and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Philemon's Faith and Love

(4) I always thank my God when I mention you in my prayers. (5) For I keep hearing about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all of God's holy people. (6) I pray that the generosity produced by your faith will deepen your understanding of every blessing you^b have in Christ.^c (7) Yes, brother, your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you have refreshed the hearts of God's holy people.

Paul's Plea for Onesimus

(8) So even though I have abundant freedom in Christ to dictate your duty, (9) I prefer to make my appeal on the basis of love. I, Paul, an ambassador^d and now even a prisoner of Christ Jesus, (10) appeal to you for my son, Onesimus, who became my spiritual son during my imprisonment. (11) Once he was useless to you, but now he is useful^e to both of us. (12) I am sending him back to you, and my heart goes with him! (13) I would like to keep him with me, so he could take your place in caring for my needs while I am in prison for the good news. (14) But I have no desire to do anything without your approval, so that your kindness can be voluntary and not a matter of compulsion.

(15) Perhaps he left you for a little while, so you could have him back forever—(16) but no longer as a slave! For he is more than a slave; he is a dear brother! He is especially dear to me and even dearer to you, both as a fellow human being and as a Christian. (17) So if you want me as your partner in the faith, give him the same welcome you would give me. (18) If he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything, charge it to me. (19) Here it is in my own handwriting^f—I, Paul, will repay you! (Not to mention the fact that you owe me your very self.) (20) Yes, brother, I desire this favor from you in my union with the Lord. Put my mind at ease in my union with Christ!

(21) I am writing to you with complete confidence in your obedience, because I know you will do even more than I ask. (22) And one more thing—please have a guest room ready for me. For I am hoping to be restored to you in answer to your prayers.

Greetings from Paul's Fellow Workers

(23) Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. (24) And so do my fellow workers, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke. (25) May the

grace of the Lord Jesus Christ^g be with your spirit.^h

^a *Apphia* was probably Philemon's wife, while *Archippus* was most likely his son.

^b Some manuscripts read *we*. ^c The meaning of the Greek in verse 6 is uncertain.

^d Or *an old man* ^e In Greek, *Onesimus* means *useful*. Although *useful* is the translation of a different Greek term in verse 11, Paul is probably engaging in a subtle play on words. ^f Paul's usual practice was to dictate his letters to a secretary, who then transcribed them. But as an added assurance, he wrote with his own hand when he promised Philemon that he would pay any debts Onesimus might have incurred. ^g Some manuscripts read *May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

^h Some manuscripts conclude with the word *Amen*.

STUDY GUIDE

- (1) What does the Epistle to Philemon teach us about Christian love?
- (2) Slavery was very common in the Roman Empire during the first century. What was Paul's attitude toward slavery? (*1 Tim. 1:9-10; Titus 2:9-10; Philem. 15-16*)
- (3) How do you think Philemon responded to this letter from Paul? Do you have any evidence to support your answer?
- (4) Why do you think that Paul's personal letter to his friend, Philemon, is part of the Bible?
- (5) Philemon has been classified as one of Paul's "Prison Epistles." Can you find any evidence that this epistle was written in prison?

Hebrews

CHAPTER 1

God's Word for the Last Days

(1) In the past, God used the prophets to speak to our ancestors^a in a fragmentary manner and in various ways. (2) But in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son, Whom He appointed Heir of all things and through Whom He made the worlds.^b

The Supremacy of God's Son

(3) The Son is the radiant outburst of God's glory, the very imprint of God's substance, and He sustains everything by His powerful word. After He had provided cleansing for our sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. (4) So He has been exalted as far above the angels as the name He has inherited is superior to theirs.

(5) For example, to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are My Son; today I have become Your Father"^c Or again, "I will be His Father, and He will be My Son"^d (6) And again, when God brought His firstborn^e Son into the world, He said, "Let all God's angels worship Him."^f

(7) Now about the angels, God said, "He makes His messengers^g winds, and His servants fiery flames."^h (8) But about the Son, He said,

"Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever,
and You will rule Your kingdomⁱ with a scepter of righteousness.

(9) You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness.
Therefore, O God, Your God has raised You above Your comrades
by anointing You with the oil of gladness."^j

(10) And,

"In the beginning, Lord, You laid the foundations of the earth,
and the heavens are the work of Your hands.

(11) They will perish, but You remain forever;
they will all become old like a robe.

(12) You will roll them up like a blanket,
and they will be changed like a robe.^k
But You are always the same,
and Your years will never run out."^l

(13) To which of the angels has God ever said,

"Sit at My right hand,

until I make Your enemies
a footstool for Your feet”^m

(14) Aren’t all the angels ministering spirits who are sent out to serve those who are destined to inherit salvation?

^a Or *fathers* ^b The Greek term can be translated *worlds* or *ages*. However, the reference in verse 3 to the Son’s sustaining power in nature strongly favors the translation *worlds*. A number of ancient writers proposed the existence of multiple worlds, and the writer to the Hebrews may have been among them, although it is also possible that the plural form has a singular meaning and refers to the entire world or the entire universe. ^c Ps. 2:7 (Septuagint) ^d 2 Sam. 7:14 (Septuagint) ^e When it is applied to Christ, the term *firstborn* never indicates that His divine nature had a beginning. Instead, the term implies that Christ is first in rank. ^f Deut. 32:43 ^g The Greek term can be translated *messengers* or *angels*. ^h Ps. 104:4 ⁱ Some manuscripts read *He will rule His kingdom*. ^j Ps. 45:6-7 ^k Some manuscripts omit *like a robe*. ^l Ps. 102:25-27 ^m Ps. 110:1 (Septuagint)

CHAPTER 2

Don’t Ignore God’s Salvation

(1) Now this is why we must pay closer attention to what we have heard, or we may drift away from it. (2) For if the message that was spoken through angels^a had such force that every transgression and act of disobedience received its just punishment, (3) how will we escape if we ignore such a great gift of salvation? The Lord Jesus^b was the first to speak of this salvation, and later, the people who heard Him confirmed its reality to us. (4) God also added His testimony by providing signs, wonders, and various kinds of miracles, and by distributing the gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His will.

The Author of Salvation

(5) For God did not put the coming world we are talking about under the control of angels. (6) On the contrary, there is a scripture where someone gives this solemn testimony:

“What is a human being^c that You remember him,
or the son of a human being that You care about him?
(7) You made him a little lower than angels;^d
yet You crowned him with glory and honor,^e
(8) and put everything under his feet.”^f

Now in putting everything under the control of humanity, God left nothing out. However, at the present time, we still do not perceive everything to be under human control. (9) But we do see Jesus, Who was made a little lower than angels. He has been crowned with glory and honor because He suffered death. For it was the gracious will of God that He experience death on behalf of everyone. (10) Yes, in leading many children to glory, it was appropriate that God, the Source and Sustainer of everything, should make the Author^g of their salvation complete through suffering.

(11) Both the One Who sanctifies and the people who are being sanctified are all descendants of one man.^h So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. (12) This is why He says, “I will proclaim Your name to My brothers; I will sing Your praises in the congregation.”ⁱ (13) Again He says, “I will put My confidence in Him.”^j And again, “Here I am, and the children God has given Me.”^k

(14) Now since His children share the same flesh and blood, Jesus also took on their common human nature, so that through His death, He could destroy the devil who holds the power of death. (15) And in this way, He freed those who were held in slavery all their lives by their fear of death.

(16) Clearly, it is not angels, but Abraham’s descendants,^l that He helps. (17) This is why He had to become like His brothers in every way, so that He could represent them before God as a merciful and faithful High Priest, and deflect God’s holy anger from the sins of the people. (18) What is more, He can help those who are being tempted, since He Himself experienced suffering when He was tempted.

^a According to Jewish tradition, the law was given to Moses through angels.

^b Although *Jesus* does not appear in the original text, the name has been inserted for clarification. ^c The Greek term that has been translated *human being* is gender inclusive. This applies to each use of *human being* in verse 6.

^d Or *For a little while, You made him lower than angels*; ^e Some manuscripts read . . . *honor. You have given him authority over the works of Your hands.*

^f Ps. 8:4-6 (Septuagint) ^g Or *Pioneer* ^h Both Jesus and His followers are descendants of Adam. ⁱ Ps. 22:22 ^j Isa. 8:17 ^k Isa. 8:18 (Septuagint) ^l Literally, *seed*,

CHAPTER 3

Jesus Is Greater than Moses

(1) Therefore, holy brothers who share our heavenly calling, fix your minds on Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest we confess. (2) He was faithful to God Who appointed Him, just as Moses was faithful in God's household.^a (3) In fact, Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the founder of a household enjoys greater honor than the household itself. (4) For every household has its founder, but God founded everything.

(5) Now Moses was a faithful servant in God's entire household, and he testified to what God would say in the future. (6) But Christ is a faithful Son, Who is in charge of God's household. And we are His household, if we hold on to our confidence and the hope of which we boast.^b

A Warning against Unbelief

(7) Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says:

“Today, if you hear His voice,
(8) do not harden your hearts
like the people did in the rebellion,
during the time of testing in the desert.
(9) Your ancestors^c tested Me severely there,
even though for 40 years, they saw what I did.
(10) This is why I was provoked by that generation.
'Their hearts are always leading them astray,' I said,
'and they haven't known My ways.'
(11) So I vowed in My anger,
'They will never enter My rest.'”^d

(12) See to it, brothers, that no one among you has an evil, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. (13) Instead, you must continue to encourage one another every day, as long as it is called “Today.” Then none of you will be hardened by the deceitful lure of sin.

(14) For we have become Christ's partners, provided that we hold our first confidence firmly to the end. (15) As it is said,

“Today, if you hear His voice,
do not harden your hearts,
like the people did in the rebellion.”^e

(16) Now who were these people who heard God's voice and rebelled against Him? Weren't they all those who came out of Egypt under the leadership of

Moses? (17) Who provoked God for 40 years? Clearly, it was those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the desert. (18) And when God vowed that they would never enter His rest, wasn't He speaking of those who disobeyed?^f (19) So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

^a Some manuscripts read *in God's entire household*. ^b Some manuscripts read *if we hold firmly to our confidence and the hope of which we boast until the end*. ^c Or *fathers* ^d Ps. 95:7-11 ^e Ps. 95:7-8 (Septuagint) ^f The generation of Israelis who followed Moses out of Egypt never reached Canaan, the promised land of rest. Because of their unbelief and consequent disobedience, God decreed that they must wander in the desert for 40 years and finally die there. However, their children were permitted to enter Canaan under Joshua.

CHAPTER 4

Rest for God's People

(1) Therefore, we must be wary while the promise of entering God's rest^a remains open, so that none of you will be found to have missed your opportunity of entering it. (2) For we also have had the good news preached to us, just as our ancestors did. But the message they heard did not benefit them, because those who heard it did not combine it with faith.

(3) Now we believers are entering that rest about which God has said:

“So I vowed in My anger,
‘They will never enter My rest.’”^b

And yet God's work has been finished since the world was created. (4) For somewhere He has spoken these words about the seventh day: “On the seventh day, God rested from all His work.”^c (5) But in the passage already quoted, He says, “They will never enter My rest.”

(6) Nevertheless, it remains a fact that some people will enter that rest, even though our ancestors who formerly had the good news preached to them failed to enter it because of their disobedience. (7) So once again, God fixed another day and called it “Today,” when long afterward, He spoke these words through David that have already been quoted:

“Today, if you hear His voice,
do not harden your hearts.”^d

(8) Now if Joshua had really given our ancestors rest, God would not have spoken

later about another day. (9) Consequently, Sabbath celebration remains a reality for God's people. (10) For anyone who has entered God's rest has also rested from his own works, just as God did from His. (11) Let us, then, be eager to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following our ancestors' example of disobedience.

God's Powerful Word

(12) For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates so deeply that it divides life and spirit, joints and marrow. And it is capable of judging the designs and intentions of the heart. (13) No creature can hide from God. Everything lies naked and exposed before the eyes of the One to Whom we must give an account.

Our Great High Priest

(14) Therefore, since we have a great High Priest Who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we confess. (15) For we have a High Priest Who can sympathize with our weaknesses. And even though He was tempted in all the ways we are, He was without sin. (16) So let us come boldly to the throne of grace, where we can receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

^a At the present time, God offers us rest from the guilt of sin through faith in Jesus Christ, and in the future, we will receive ultimate rest in God's kingdom after Christ has returned. This rest in Christ is symbolized by the rest of the Sabbath and the rest in the land of Canaan that the people of Israel enjoyed under Joshua. ^b Ps. 95:11 (Septuagint)—see also verse 5. ^c Gen. 2:2 ^d Ps. 95:7-8 (Septuagint)

CHAPTER 5

Aaron, Melchizedek, and Christ

(1) Each high priest is selected from among his fellow human beings^a and is appointed as a representative before God on their behalf. In other words, he offers gifts and sacrifices for their sins. (2) And since he also is subject to weakness, he has the ability to be gentle with ignorant and erring people. (3) This is why he is required to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people.

(4) No one chooses the honor of this office for himself. The high priest must be called by God, just as Aaron was. (5) Now in the same way, Christ did not choose the glory of being a High Priest for Himself. Instead, God said to Him, "You are

My Son; today I have become Your Father.”^b (6) And in another place, God said, “You are a Priest forever, with the same rank as Melchizedek.”^c

(7) During the time He lived on earth,^d Christ offered up prayers and appeals, with loud crying and tears, to the One Who could rescue Him from death. And He was heard because of His reverent devotion. (8) Although He was God’s Son, He learned obedience from what He suffered, (9) and after He had attained His goal, He became the Source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him. (10) So He was proclaimed by God to be High Priest, with the same rank as Melchizedek.

The Need for Christian Maturity

(11) We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because your ability to listen has become so dull. (12) As a matter of fact, at a time when you should be teachers, you need someone to teach you the basic truths of God’s word all over again. You have become people who need milk instead of solid food.

(13) Now anyone who continues to live on milk is still a baby and is unacquainted with God’s message about righteousness. (14) But solid food is for mature adults, whose senses have been trained by practice to recognize the difference between good and evil.

^a The Greek term that has been translated *fellow human beings* is gender inclusive. ^b Ps. 2:7 (Septuagint) ^c Ps. 110:4 ^d Literally, *During the days of His flesh*,

CHAPTER 6

(1) So then, we must leave the first lessons about Christ behind and move on to maturity. We don’t need to be laying down the foundational teachings all over again: repentance from deeds that lead to death, faith in God, (2) instruction about Jewish ritual washings,^a laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. (3) We must move on!^b And this is what we will do if God allows it.

The Danger of Falling Away

(4) For it is an impossible situation when people have once been enlightened and have had a taste of the heavenly gift, when they have shared in the Holy Spirit (5) and experienced the goodness of God’s word and the miraculous powers of the coming age, (6) and then have fallen away. We cannot restore such people to repentance as long as they keep crucifying the Son of God afresh and exposing Him to public shame.

(7) When land soaks up the rain that often falls on it and continues to produce a crop that is useful to its farmers, it shares in God's blessing. (8) But land that goes on producing thorns and thistles is worthless and almost cursed. And it will finally be burned.

(9) Now even though we are speaking like this, dear friends, we are confident that there are better things in store for you that will result in your salvation. (10) For God is just, and He will remember your work and the love you have showed Him as you have served His holy people and continue to serve them. (11) But we long for each of you to go on demonstrating the same zeal to the very end, so that your hope can reach its fulfillment. (12) We don't want you to become lazy. Instead, we want you to imitate those who through faith and endurance are inheriting what has been promised.

God's Sure Promise

(13) When God made His promise to Abraham, He swore an oath by Himself, since there was no one greater to swear by. (14) "I will surely bless you," He said, "and I will give you many descendants."^c (15) And so, after patient waiting, Abraham received what God had promised.

(16) Now people^d swear by something that is greater than they are, and their oath serves as a legal guarantee that puts an end to all controversy. (17) In the same way, when God wanted to provide the heirs of His promise with a compelling demonstration of the unchangeable nature of His plan, He guaranteed it with an oath. (18) So God's oath and plan^e are two things that cannot change and about which He cannot lie. And they give all of us Who have taken refuge in Him a strong incentive to lay hold of the hope that is set before us.

(19) We have this hope as an anchor for our lives. Sure and steadfast, it reaches behind the curtain,^f (20) where Jesus, our Forerunner, has entered on our behalf. He has become a High Priest forever, with the same rank as Melchizedek.

^a Or *baptisms*, ^b Although this sentence does not appear in the original text, it has been added for clarification. ^c Gen. 22:17 ^d The Greek term that has been translated *people* is gender inclusive. ^e Although the words, *God's oath and plan*, do not appear in the original text, they have been added for clarification. ^f The tabernacle that the people of Israel built during the time of Moses contained two compartments that were separated by a curtain. These compartments were known as the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. When Jesus ascended to heaven, He entered the immediate presence of God (the heavenly counterpart to the earthly Most Holy Place) and began to officiate as our High Priest.

CHAPTER 7

The Priest-King Melchizedek

(1) This Melchizedek, who was king of Salem^a and priest of God Most High, met Abraham as he was returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him. (2) Then Abraham gave him a tenth of everything.^b

Now first of all, Melchizedek's name means "king of righteousness." And he was also known as the "king of Salem," which means "king of peace."^c (3) What is more, we have no record of his father, mother, or ancestors. Nor do we have a record of the beginning or ending of his life. So like the Son of God, he remains a priest for all time.^d

(4) Just think how great he was! Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder he had captured. (5) Now the descendants^e of Levi who enter the priesthood are required by law to collect tithe^f from the people—that is, from their fellow Israelis—even though all the Israelis are included in Abraham's family. (6) But this Melchizedek, whose descent was not traced from Levi, collected tithe from Abraham and gave his blessing to the man who had received God's promises. (7) And it is beyond all dispute that the lesser person is blessed by the greater.

(8) In one case, tithe is collected by men who are always dying. But in the other case, it was collected by someone who is declared to be alive. (9) In fact, it might even be said that Levi, the tithe collector, paid tithe through Abraham. (10) For Levi was still in the body of his ancestor^g when Melchizedek met him.

A Comparison of Two Priesthoods

(11) Now if perfection was available through the Levitical priesthood (for it was in connection with this system that the people were provided with the law), why did God speak of another kind of Priest Who still needed to come—a Priest with the rank of Melchizedek and not with the rank of Aaron?

(12) But a change in the priesthood actually requires a change in the law. (13) For the Person we are talking about was associated with a different tribe, and its members have never served at the altar. (14) Although everyone knows that our Lord emerged from Judah, Moses never said anything about priests who would come from that tribe. (15) And the appearance of another Priest Who is like Melchizedek makes our point even more obvious.

(16) This Priest owes His priesthood, not to a commandment about physical descent, but to the power of a life that cannot be destroyed. (17) For we have the following testimony about Him: "You are a Priest forever, with the same

rank as Melchizedek.”^h (18) Clearly, that earlier commandment has been set aside because it was weak and useless—(19) since the law made nothing perfect. And now a better hope has been introduced, by which we draw near to God.

(20) Furthermore, the priesthood of Jesus was established with an oath. Even though other men were appointed to the priesthood without an oath, (21) when Jesus became a Priest, God took an oath as He spoke these words to Him:

“The Lord has vowed and will not change His mind,
‘You are a Priest forever.’”

(22) So because of God’s oath, Jesus has become the Guarantee of a better covenant.

(23) There have been many Levitical priests, because death has prevented them from remaining in office. (24) But since Jesus lives forever, He holds a priesthood that can never be transferred to anyone else. (25) And as for those who come to God through Him, He has the ability to save them completely, because He always lives to intercede on their behalf.

(26) Why a High Priest like this is just what we need! He is holy, innocent, and pure. He has been set apart from sinners and exalted above the heavens. (27) Unlike the Levitical high priests, He has no need to offer sacrifices every day, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people. For He accomplished this work once and for all when He offered Himself.

(28) Now the high priests who are appointed by the law are men who have weaknesses. But the words of the oath that came after the law appointed a High Priest Who is God’s Son, and He has been rendered eternally complete.

^a Or *Jerusalem* ^b See Gen. 14:17-20. ^c In Hebrew, *Melchizedek* means “king of righteousness,” and the name *Salem* is closely related to the Hebrew word for peace. ^d These things can only be said about Melchizedek in so far as he portrays Christ. Although both the affirmations and the silences in the Genesis account allow him to function as a type of Christ, the historical Melchizedek was certainly a mortal priest-king who had ancestors and descendants. ^e Or *sons* ^f A tithe is 10% of a person’s income. ^g Or *father* ^h Ps. 110:4—see also verse 21.

CHAPTER 8

A New and Better Covenant

(1) The main point of what we are saying is that we actually have this kind of High Priest.^a He has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, (2) where He serves as the ministering Priest in the sanctuary—the real tabernacle that was set up by the Lord and not by human beings.^b (3) For since every High Priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices, this High Priest had to offer something as well.

(4) Now if He were on earth, He would not even be a priest, since there are other priests here who offer the gifts required by the law. (5) These priests serve at a sanctuary that is a shadowy outline of the one in heaven. This is why Moses was given the following warning when he was about to build the tabernacle: “See to it that you make everything exactly like the model you were shown on the mountain.”^c

(6) But Jesus has been given a superior ministry, since He is the Mediator of a better covenant that has been enacted on better promises. (7) In fact, if that first covenant had been faultless, no one would have expected a second one. (8) However, God demonstrated its faults when He spoke these words to His people:^d

“The time is coming, declares the Lord,
when I will conclude a new covenant
with the people of Israel and the people of Judah.
(9) It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors,^e
when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt.
For they did not remain faithful to My covenant,
and I withdrew My favor from them, declares the Lord.

(10) This is the covenant I will make
with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord.
I will put My laws in their minds and write them on their hearts.
I will be their God, and they will be My people.
(11) Never again will there be a need for anyone
to teach his fellow citizen^f or his brother to know the Lord—
because they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest.
(12) For I will be merciful when I see their wicked deeds,
and never again will I remember their sins.”^g

(13) Now in speaking of a new covenant, God has declared the first covenant obsolete, and anything that is obsolete and growing old will soon disappear.

^a The writer to the Hebrews is referring to the kind of High Priest described in Heb. 7:11-28. ^b The Greek term that has been translated *human beings* is gender inclusive. ^c Ex. 25:40 ^d Or *God demonstrated its faults to His people when He*

spoke these words:—some manuscripts read *God found fault with His people when He spoke these words:* ^e Or *fathers*, ^f Some manuscripts read *his neighbor*.
^g Jer. 31:31-34

CHAPTER 9

The Earthly Sanctuary and Its Services

(1) Nevertheless, even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly sanctuary. (2) A tabernacle was constructed, with an outer compartment that contained the lampstand and the table with its display of bread. This compartment was called the Holy Place.

(3) Now behind the second curtain was another compartment called the Most Holy Place. (4) It contained the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant, in which the following items were kept: a golden pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. (5) Above the ark were the glorious cherubs^a that were overshadowing the mercy seat.^b But now is not the time to go into detail about these things.

(6) Under this arrangement, the priests were always entering the outer compartment to perform its sacred services. (7) However, only the high priest entered the inner compartment. He went into it once a year with blood that he offered for himself and for the sins that the people had committed in ignorance. (8) The Holy Spirit was using these rituals to draw attention to the fact that the way into the Most Holy Place had not been disclosed as long as the outer compartment retained its status.^c

(9) This compartment serves as an illustration for the present time. It indicates that the gifts and sacrifices which are currently being offered can never provide the conscience of the worshiper with perfect cleansing. (10) They are only a matter of foods and drinks and various ritual washings—external regulations that were imposed on the people until the coming of the new order.

A Covenant in Blood

(11) But when Christ appeared as High Priest of the blessings that have come,^d He went in through the greater and more perfect tabernacle—the one that was not made by hands (which means that it is not part of this creation). (12) He did not enter it with the blood of goats and calves. No, He entered once and for all into the Most Holy Place with His own blood and secured our eternal redemption.

(13) Now if sprinkling the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer on people who have been defiled can sanctify them and restore their ritual purity, (14) how much more has been accomplished by the blood of Christ! Through the eternal Spirit,^e He offered Himself without blemish to God and cleansed our^f consciences from deeds that lead to death, so that we can serve the living God. (15) And because Christ is the Mediator of a new covenant, the people God has called can receive the eternal inheritance they were promised, since the death of Christ redeemed them from the transgressions they had committed during the time of the first covenant.

(16) When a will^g is being examined, the death of the person who made it must be proven, (17) because a will is only valid when someone has died; it can never be put into effect while the person who made it is still alive. (18) So this is why even the first covenant had to be ratified with blood. (19) For after Moses had proclaimed every commandment in the law to the entire assembly of people, he took the blood of calves,^h along with some water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. (20) “This is the blood of the covenant that God has commanded you to keep,”ⁱ he told them. (21) And in the same way, he sprinkled blood on the tabernacle and on everything used in its worship. (22) In fact, according to the law, nearly everything must be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness.

Christ's Work in the Heavenly Sanctuary

(23) So then, the symbols of the heavenly sanctuary had to be cleansed by these sacrifices, but the heavenly sanctuary itself required a better sacrifice than these. (24) For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by hands that was only a model of the real thing. He entered heaven itself, where He now appears in the presence of God on our behalf.

(25) It was not His intention to offer Himself again and again in the manner of the high priest, who goes into the Most Holy Place every year with the blood of another animal. (26) In that case, it would have been necessary for Christ to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now, at the close of the ages, He has appeared once and for all to abolish sin through the sacrifice of Himself. (27) In fact, just as human beings^j are destined to die once, with judgment to follow, (28) so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people. And He will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to bring salvation to those who are eagerly waiting for Him.

^a Cherubs are angels. ^b The mercy seat was the lid to the ark of the covenant, and golden statues of angels were attached to it. ^c The outer compartment or Holy Place was an obstruction that prevented worshipers in the courtyard from viewing the sacred rituals on the Day of Atonement that were carried out in the Most Holy Place. Consequently, these rituals were always shrouded in mystery. Furthermore, the endless round of ceremonies performed in the outer compartment only reminded the worshipers that animal sacrifices could never provide them with a lasting atonement for sin. But when Christ completed His atoning work and

ascended to His Father in heaven, He removed all the obstructions and provided us with full access to God. ^dSome manuscripts read *that are coming*. ^eSome manuscripts read *Through the Holy Spirit*. ^fSome manuscripts read *your*. ^gThe Greek term that has been translated *covenant* can also be rendered *will*. Since a will only goes into effect when the person who made it dies, God's covenants had to be ratified by shed blood, which signified death. ^hSome manuscripts read *calves and goats*. ⁱEx. 24:8 ^jThe Greek term that has been translated *human beings* is gender inclusive.

CHAPTER 10

Christ's Perfect Sacrifice

(1) The law is a shadowy outline^a of the blessings to come, and not the true picture of these realities. So with the same sacrifices that are offered endlessly year after year, it can never provide the people who draw near to worship with perfect cleansing. (2) For if the law really had this ability, sacrificial offerings would come to an end, since the worshipers would be cleansed once and for all, and their consciences would no longer feel the guilt of sin. (3) But those sacrifices actually serve as an annual reminder of sin, (4) because the blood of bulls and goats is powerless to remove it.

(5) Now this is why Christ spoke these words when He came into the world:

“You did not desire sacrifices and offerings,
but You prepared a body for Me.

(6) With burnt offerings and sin offerings,
You were not pleased.

(7) Then I said, ‘See, I have come to do Your will, O God -
just as it is written about Me in the scroll.’”^b

(8) In the first part of this passage, Christ says, “You neither desired, nor were You pleased with sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings” (even though they are required by law). (9) Then He adds, “See, I have come to do Your will.” So He abolishes what came earlier to establish what came later. (10) And by God's will, we have been sanctified through the bodily sacrifice of Jesus Christ once and for all.

(11) Day after day, every priest stands and performs the sacred rituals. Again and again, he offers the same sacrifices that can never take away sin. (12) But when Christ had offered one sacrifice for sin that was valid for all eternity, He sat down at the right hand of God. (13) And now He is waiting until His enemies become a footstool for His feet. (14) For by one sacrifice, He has provided the people who are being sanctified with a perfect and eternal cleansing.

(15) Moreover, the Holy Spirit also keeps testifying to us about these things. For He says:

(16) “This is the covenant I will make
with them after that time, declares the Lord.
I will put My laws in their hearts
and write them on their minds.”^c

(17) Then He adds:

“I will never remember their sins
and lawless deeds again.”^d

(18) Now wherever these sins have been forgiven, an offering for sin is no longer necessary.

An Enduring Confidence

(19) Therefore, brothers, we have complete freedom to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus. (20) We can enter it by a new and living way that He consecrated for us—a way that leads through the curtain, which represents His flesh.^e (21) And since we have a great Priest Who presides over God’s household, (22) let us continue to draw near with sincere hearts and unfaltering faith. For our hearts have been sprinkled to free us from our guilty consciences, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.

(23) So let us continue firm and unwavering in the hope we confess, because the One Who gave us His promise is faithful. (24) Let us make it our practice to spur one another on toward love and good deeds. (25) Let us not abandon meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing. Instead, we must encourage one another even more as we see the day of Christ^f approaching.

(26) For if we deliberately go on sinning after we have learned the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice to take away our sin. (27) All that remains is a terrifying prospect of judgment, and a raging fire that will devour the enemies of God. (28) Anyone who flouted the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. (29) And how much more severe do you think the punishment should be for the person who tramples the Son of God underfoot, who shows contempt for the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who insults God’s gracious Spirit? (30) We are well acquainted with the One Who said, “Vengeance is Mine; I will repay,”^g and again, “The Lord will judge His people.”^h (31) It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God!

(32) Always remind yourselves of those early days after you had received the light, when you endured a hard contest that involved suffering. (33) Some of you were publicly exposed to insults and oppression, while others showed their solidarity with the people who were being treated that way. (34) You expressed

sympathy for those who were in prison and cheerfully accepted the plundering of your property, because you knew you had better possessions that would be permanent.

(35) So don't throw away your confidence, for it will bring you a great reward.
(36) As a matter of fact, you need endurance to do God's will and to win what He has promised.

(37) "For in just a little while,
the Coming Oneⁱ will arrive
and will not be late.
(38) Now My righteous one^j
will live by faith.
But if anyone turns back,
I will not be pleased with him."^k

(39) However, we are not among those who turn back and perish, for we have the faith to preserve our lives.

^a Literally, *a shadow* ^b Ps. 40:6-8 ^c Jer. 31:33 ^d Jer. 31:34 ^e Although the inner curtain in the earthly sanctuary barred worshipers from the Most Holy Place, in another sense, it was the connecting link between those worshipers and the presence of God, which was manifested in that compartment. Furthermore, when Christ died on the cross, the inner curtain was supernaturally ripped from top to bottom (see Matt. 27:51 and Luke 23:45). Now in the same way, Christ is the connecting Link between God and humanity, and when Christ's flesh was ripped on the cross, the way into the heavenly Most Holy Place was thrown open, giving the human race full access to God. ^f Although the words, *of Christ*, do not appear in the original text, they have been added for clarification. ^g Deut. 32:35 ^h Deut. 32:36 (Septuagint); Ps. 135:14 (Septuagint) ⁱ *The Coming One* is a Messianic title that refers to Jesus. ^j Some manuscripts read *the righteous one*. ^k Isa. 26:20; Hab. 2:3-4

CHAPTER 11

What Is Faith?

(1) Faith is confidence in things that are hoped for and conviction about realities that are unseen. (2) It was by this kind of faith that the people of old won God's approval.

Faith in the Creator

(3) By faith, we understand that the worlds^a were formed at God's command. So the things that are visible owe their existence to what is invisible.

The Faith of Abel

(4) By faith, Abel brought God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith, he was declared to be righteous, when God approved of his offerings. And by faith, he is still speaking, even though he is dead.

The Faith of Enoch

(5) By faith, Enoch was translated to another life without experiencing death, and he could not be found, because God had translated him. For before his translation occurred, God had declared that He was pleased with Enoch. (6) But without faith, it is impossible to please God. For the person who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who keep searching for Him.

The Faith of Noah

(7) By faith, Noah heeded God's warning about events that were as yet unseen, and in holy awe, he built an ark to save his family. By faith, he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

The Faith of Abraham

(8) By faith, Abraham obeyed God's call and went to a place he would eventually receive as his possession—even though he had no idea where he was going. (9) By faith, he migrated to a foreign land that he had been promised, where he lived in tents with Isaac and Jacob, who were fellow heirs of the same promise. (10) Abraham did these things because he was looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, whose Designer and Builder is God.

The Faith of Sarah

(11) By faith, Sarah herself was given the ability to conceive a child, although she was well past menopause. For she was convinced that the One Who had made the promise was faithful.^b (12) So from one man—a man as good as dead—descendants sprang up who are as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the grains of sand on the seashore.

The People Who Died in Faith

(13) All these people died in faith, without receiving the things that were promised. But they saw them in the distant future and welcomed them, and they confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on earth. (14) As a matter of fact, people who say such things make it clear that they are looking for a homeland of their own. (15) Now if they were thinking of the country they had left, they would have found an opportunity to return to it. (16) But they were yearning for a better country—a heavenly one. And this is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, since He has prepared a city for them.

The Faith of Abraham

(17) By faith, Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice, when God put His servant to the test. So the man who had received the promises was ready to offer his only son, (18) even though God had said, “It is through Isaac that your descendants^c will be reckoned.”^d (19) Abraham was convinced that God could raise people from the dead. And in a figurative sense, he did get Isaac back from the dead!

The Faith of Isaac and Jacob

(20) By faith, Isaac conferred future blessings on Jacob and Esau. (21) By faith, a dying Jacob blessed each of Joseph’s sons as he bowed in worship on the top of his staff.

The Faith of Joseph

(22) By faith, Joseph spoke about the Israeli exodus from Egypt, as his life was coming to an end. And he left instructions about the burial of his bones.

The Faith of Moses’ Parents

(23) By faith, Moses’ parents hid him for three months after he was born. For they could see that he was an extraordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king’s decree.

The Faith of Moses

(24) By faith, Moses refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, after he had grown up. (25) He chose mistreatment with God’s people over the fleeting pleasure of sin, (26) because he thought that being insulted for the sake of Christ was of greater value than Egyptian treasure. For his eyes were fixed on the coming reward.

(27) By faith, Moses abandoned Egypt without fearing the king’s rage. In fact, it was as if he kept a steady gaze on the invisible One. (28) By faith, he established the Passover and sprinkled the blood to prevent the destroyer from touching the firstborn of Israel.

The Faith of the Israelis

(29) By faith, the people passed through the Red Sea as if it were dry land. But when the Egyptians tried to do the same thing, they were drowned. (30) By faith, the walls of Jericho fell after the people had surrounded them for seven days.

The Faith of Rahab

(31) By faith, the prostitute Rahab escaped the destruction of the disobedient when she welcomed the spies in peace.

Other Heroes of Faith

(32) What more should I say? I don't have enough time to tell you stories about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets. (33) It was by faith that they conquered kingdoms, practiced deeds of righteousness, and gained what was promised. They shut the mouths of lions, (34) quenched the power of fire, and escaped being killed by the sword. They found strength when they were weak; they became powerful in battle, and they put foreign armies to rout. (35) Women received their resurrected loved ones back from the dead.

But others were beaten to death without accepting the release they were offered—so they could rise to a better life. (36) Still others endured mockings and floggings, and even chains and imprisonment. (37) They were stoned, sawed in two,^e and murdered by the sword. They went around in the skins of sheep and goats—needy, oppressed, and mistreated. (38) The world was not worthy of them. They were wanderers who lived in deserts, mountains, caves, and holes in the ground.

(39) All these people won God's approval by faith, but they never received what was promised. (40) For God had developed a better plan with us in mind. It was His plan that only with us would they reach their goal.

^a The Greek term can be translated *worlds* or *ages*. However, the reference in verse 3 to things that are visible strongly favors the translation *worlds*. A number of ancient writers proposed the existence of multiple worlds, and the writer to the Hebrews may have been among them, although it is also possible that the plural form has a singular meaning and refers to the entire world or the entire universe. ^b It is possible to translate verse 11 with Abraham as the subject, rather than Sarah. The meaning of the Greek is uncertain. ^c Literally, *seed* ^d Gen. 21:12 (Septuagint) ^e According to tradition, the prophet Isaiah was sawed in two when Manasseh was king of Judah.

CHAPTER 12

The Race of Faith

(1) Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a vast cloud of witnesses, let us strip off everything that weighs us down and the sin that so easily entangles us.^a Let us show endurance as we continue running the race that lies before us. (2) Let us keep our gaze fixed on Jesus, Who provides us with faith from start to finish. Instead of the joy that was marked out for Him,^b He endured the cross. And disregarding its shame, He has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

The Lord's Discipline

(3) Contemplate the One Who endured such hostility from sinners, so you don't become weary and discouraged. (4) In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your own blood. (5) And have you completely forgotten these encouraging words that address you as sons?^c

“My son, do not treat the Lord's discipline lightly,
or be discouraged when He corrects you.

(6) For the Lord disciplines the one He loves,
and He whips every person He accepts as a son.”^d

(7) You must endure suffering as a discipline, because God is treating you like sons. And is there any son who is not disciplined by his father? (8) So if you are not experiencing the discipline that all sons share, you are illegitimate children and not true sons.

(9) What is more, our human fathers used to discipline us, and we respected them for it. But isn't it much more important for us to submit to our spiritual Father, so we can live? (10) Our human fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best. But God disciplines us for our good, so we can share in His holiness. (11) Whenever we experience discipline, it always seems to bring us pain instead of joy. But later on, it produces a peaceful harvest of righteousness for those who have been trained by it.

(12) So strengthen those drooping arms and weak knees! (13) Keep your feet moving in a straight direction—so your lame legs can be healed and not dislocated.

Be Careful How You Live

(14) Always seek peace with everyone, as well as holiness. For without a holy life, no one will see the Lord.^e (15) Make sure no one loses out on the grace of God, and that no bitter weed grows up and causes you trouble—or many

people could be contaminated. (16) See to it that no one is sexually immoral, or worldly like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. (17) You are aware that afterward, when he wanted to claim the blessing, he was rejected. He found no opportunity to reconsider what he had done, even though he pleaded for the blessing with tears.

(18) You have not come to something tangible:^f to burning fire, deep darkness, eerie gloom, and violent windstorm. (19) You have not heard a trumpet blast or the speaking of a voice that made the people who heard it beg to hear no more of its words. (20) For they could not bear the command that said, “If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned.”^g (21) The sight was so frightening that Moses commented, “I am terrified and quivering with fear.”^h

(22) No, you have come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to innumerable angels who are joyfully gathered together, (23) and to the congregation of the firstborn, whose names have been registered in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, and to the spiritsⁱ of righteous people who have been perfectly cleansed. (24) You have come to Jesus, the Mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that proclaims a better message than the blood of Abel.^j

(25) See to it that you don’t reject the One Who is speaking. For if the people did not escape when they rejected the one who warned them on earth,^k how much less will we escape if we turn away from the One Who warns us from heaven? (26) At that time, His voice shook the earth. But now He has promised, “Once again I will shake not only the earth, but heaven as well.”^l

(27) The expression “once again” makes it clear that created things will be shaken and removed, so that the things that cannot be shaken will remain. (28) Therefore, since we are receiving an unshakable kingdom, let us be thankful and worship God in a way that pleases Him, with reverence and awe. (29) For our God is a consuming fire!^m

^a Some manuscripts read *the sin that so easily distracts us.* ^b Or *Because of the joy that was marked out for Him,* ^c Or *And you have completely forgotten these encouraging words that address you as sons:* ^d Prov. 3:11-12 ^e Because the lives of Christians remain sinful and imperfect, holy living merits nothing in the sight of God. Clearly, our salvation is a free gift that is based on Christ’s work outside of us in history. In other words, God accepts us just as we are. But He never leaves us just as we are. Little by little, Christ changes us and works holiness into our lives. And since this growth in holiness is the inevitable fruit of accepting Christ’s gift of salvation, no one will enter His kingdom without it. ^f Some manuscripts read *You have not come to a mountain that can be touched.* ^g Ex. 19:12-13 ^h Deut. 9:19 ⁱ Or *lives* ^j The blood of murdered Abel called out for justice, but the blood of Jesus calls out for mercy and forgiveness. ^k This is probably referring to those who disobeyed Moses. ^l Hag. 2:6 ^m Deut. 4:24

CHAPTER 13

Final Counsel

(1) Always show brotherly love. (2) Don't forget to practice hospitality, for by doing this, some people have entertained angels without realizing it. (3) Continue to remember those who are in prison, as if you were in prison with them, and those who are being mistreated, as if you could feel their pain in your own body.

(4) Marriage must be honored by everyone, and sexual relations must remain between husbands and wives.^a For God will judge adultery, as well as sexual sin outside of marriage.

(5) Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have. For God Himself has said, "I will never leave you or abandon you."^b (6) So we can say with confidence,

"The Lord is my Helper;
I will not be afraid.
What can anyone^c do to me?"^d

(7) Continue to remember your leaders who have spoken God's word to you. Think about the impact of their lives, and imitate their faith. (8) Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever! (9) So don't be carried away by all kinds of strange teaching. It is good to gain spiritual strength from the grace of God, and not from rules about food,^e which have never benefited those who live by them. (10) For we have an altar from which the priests who serve in the tabernacle have no right to eat.

(11) The high priest carries the blood of living creatures into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but their bodies are burned outside the camp. (12) And this is why Jesus suffered outside the city gate, to sanctify the people by His own blood. (13) So let us go to Him outside the camp and endure the insults He suffered.^f (14) For we have no permanent city here, but we are looking for the one to come.

(15) Through Jesus, let us always bring God a sacrifice of praise, because praise is produced by lips that confess His name. (16) Don't forget to be kind and to share what you have with others. For these sacrifices are pleasing to God.

(17) Continue to obey your leaders, and always submit to their authority. For they must give an account of how they have watched over you. See to it that they are happy in their work and without complaint, or you yourselves will be the losers.

(18) Continue to pray for us. We are convinced that our consciences are clear, because in every way, we want to do what is right. (19) I especially request your

prayers, so I can be restored to you very soon.

Doxology

(20) Now may the God of peace, Who by the blood of the eternal covenant brought our Lord Jesus,^g that great Shepherd of the sheep, back from the dead, (21) equip you with all that is good,^h so you can do His will. And may He produce in usⁱ what is pleasing to Him, through Jesus Christ. To Him be glory forever!^j Amen.

Final Greetings

(22) I beg you, brothers, listen patiently to my message of encouragement, for I have written you a short letter. (23) Be aware that our brother Timothy has been released, and if he arrives soon, he will be with me when I come to see you.

(24) I send my greetings to all your leaders and to all of God's holy people. Our friends from Italy send you their greetings.

(25) May grace be with all of you!^k

^a Literally, *and the marriage bed must remain undefiled*. ^b Deut. 31:6 ^c The Greek term that has been translated *anyone* is gender inclusive. ^d Ps. 118:6 (Septuagint) ^e Literally, *It is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace and not by foods*. ^f This may be a veiled call for the Jews to give up their traditional beliefs and turn to Jesus. ^g Some manuscripts read *our Lord Jesus Christ*. ^h Some manuscripts read *equip you with every good work*. ⁱ Some manuscripts read *in you*. ^j Some manuscripts read *forever and ever!* ^k Some manuscripts conclude with the word *Amen*.

STUDY GUIDE

(1) Why is God's revelation through Jesus superior to the revelations that He gave through the Old Testament prophets? (*Heb. 1:1-2*)

(2) In what ways is Jesus superior to the angels? (*Heb. 1:3-13*)

(3) How did Jesus' death destroy the devil? Isn't the devil still active today? (*Heb. 2:14*)

(4) What kind of rest is God offering us? (*Heb. 3:16-4:11*)

(5) What is the Sabbath celebration that remains a reality for God's people? (*Heb. 4:9*)

- (6) In what sense is Christ a High Priest? (*Heb. 5:1-6*)
- (7) Who was Melchizedek? How did he function as a figure of Christ?
(*Gen. 14:17-20; Heb. 7:1-10*)
- (8) Why is the new covenant superior to the old covenant? (*Heb. 8:6-9:28*)
- (9) Why must blood be shed before God is willing to forgive sin?
(*Lev. 17:11; Rom. 6:23; Heb. 9:22*)
- (10) What does it mean to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus?
What assurance does this give us? (*Heb. 10:19-22*)
- (11) Why is it important to go to church? (*Heb. 10:23-25*)
- (12) How does the writer to the Hebrews define faith? (*Heb. 11:1*)
- (13) Rahab, Jephthah, and Samson did not set good examples in the way they lived their lives. So why are they included among the heroes of faith? Does this teach us anything about God's grace? (*Heb. 11:31-32*)

James

CHAPTER 1

Greetings from James

(1) From James,^a a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Greetings to the twelve tribes that are scattered abroad.^b

Endurance and Wisdom

(2) My brothers, consider it pure joy when different kinds of trials come your way. (3) For you are aware that the testing of your faith produces endurance. (4) And you must let endurance finish its work. Then you will be completely mature, with no need of anything.

(5) If anyone among you lacks wisdom, he should ask God for it, and it will be given to him. For God gives generous gifts to people everywhere without rebuking them. (6) But the person who asks must ask in faith, without doubting. For the doubter is like a wave of the sea that is tossed here and there by the wind. (7) Such a person^c should not expect to receive anything from the Lord, (8) because he always wavers between two opinions and is unstable in all that he does.

The Rich Will Perish

(9) The brother in humble circumstances should boast of his exalted status. (10) But the rich person should boast of being brought low. For he will disappear like a blossom on a plant, (11) when the sunrise brings a scorching wind. The heat dries up the plant; its blossom falls off, and its beauty is ruined. And in the same way, the rich person will waste away as he goes about his business.

The Source of Our Temptations

(12) How blessed^d is the person who continues to endure temptation! When he has passed the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him. (13) No one who is being tempted should say that God is tempting him. For God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself tempts no one. (14) Instead, each person is tempted by his own desire as it lures him away and traps him. (15) Then desire conceives and gives birth to sin, and when sin has reached maturity, it gives birth to death.

The Source of Our Blessings

(16) Don't allow yourselves to be deceived, my dear brothers. (17) All giving that is good comes from above, and so does every perfect gift. They descend from the Father Who made the heavenly lights, with Whom there is no change or shadow caused by rotation.^e (18) He chose to give us new birth through the word of truth, so we would be the first and best of His creatures.^f

Godly Living

(19) My dear brothers, remember this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry. (20) For human anger does not promote God's righteousness. (21) So get rid of every kind of moral filth and wicked excess, and humbly accept the implanting of the word within you—which can save you.

(22) You must continue to do what the word says and not delude yourselves by merely listening to it. (23) Anyone who listens to the word without doing what it says is like a man who peers at his face in a mirror, (24) and after looking himself over, goes away and promptly forgets what he looks like. (25) But the person who looks intently into the perfect law that brings freedom and who fixes his gaze on it without becoming a forgetful listener is a diligent worker who will be blessed in what he does.

(26) If anyone seems to be devout without controlling his tongue, he is deceiving himself, and his devotion means nothing. (27) Devotion is pure and undefiled before God the Father if the believer looks after orphans and widows in their distress and keeps himself unspotted by the world.

^a The James who wrote this epistle was the brother of our Lord Jesus Christ and also the brother of Jude. Unlike James, the son of Zebedee, and James, the son of Alphaeus, the author of this epistle was not one of the original twelve apostles. ^b James' reference to *the twelve tribes that are scattered abroad* indicates that he was writing to Jewish Christians. ^c The Greek term that has been translated *person* is gender inclusive. ^d Or *happy*—see also verse 25. ^e James seems to be referring to the interplay of the earth and the celestial lights, which results in the procession of day and night, as well as in solar and lunar eclipses. But God's giving is never eclipsed. ^f Literally, *so we could be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures*.

CHAPTER 2

Don't Show Prejudice

(1) My brothers, don't combine faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with prejudice. (2) Suppose a man wearing a gold ring and elegant clothes comes into your synagogue,^a and a poor man in filthy clothes also comes in. (3) If you devote special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say to him, "Here's a good seat for you," while you tell the poor man, "Stand over there," or "Sit on the floor by my footstool," (4) haven't you practiced discrimination within your fellowship and allowed corrupt reasoning to influence your judgment?

(5) Listen, my dear brothers! Didn't God choose the poor people in this world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom that He promised those who love Him? (6) But you have dishonored the poor. Aren't the rich oppressing you and dragging you into court? (7) Don't they slander the good name by which you have been called?

(8) If you are really obeying the royal law found in scripture, "You must love your neighbor as yourself,"^b you are doing what is right. (9) But if you show prejudice, you are committing a sin and are convicted by the law as offenders. (10) Anyone who keeps the whole law except for one point is guilty of breaking it all. (11) For the One Who said, "Do not commit adultery,"^c also said, "Do not murder."^d Now even if you don't commit adultery, you have become a legal offender if you commit murder. (12) So always speak and act like people who are going to be judged by a law that brings freedom. (13) For merciless judgment will come on anyone who has not practiced mercy. But mercy triumphs over judgment!

Faith and Deeds

(14) What good is it, my brothers, if someone claims to have faith without deeds? Can that faith save him? (15) Suppose a brother or sister needs clothes and a daily supply of food, (16) and one of you says, "Go in peace; keep warm, and eat well!" But if you provide nothing to meet the person's physical needs, what good is that? (17) So faith by itself that doesn't lead to action is dead.

(18) But someone may say, "You have faith, and I have deeds."^e I would respond, "Show me your faith apart from deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds." (19) Do you believe that God is one?^g Good for you! Even the demons believe that, and they quiver with fright.

(20) You empty person!^h Do you want proof that faith without deeds is a sham?ⁱ (21) Wasn't our ancestor^j Abraham deemed righteous^k because of what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?^l (22) Surely you can see that his faith

and his actions were cooperating together, and that faith was brought to maturity by what he did. (23) So the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”^m And he was called God’s friend. (24) You can see then that a person is deemed righteous because of what he does and not by faith alone.

(25) The prostitute Rahab is another example of this. Wasn’t she deemed righteous because of what she did when she welcomed the messengersⁿ and sent them away on a different road?^o (26) For just as the body is dead when it has no breath, so faith without deeds is also dead.

^a Or *assembly*, ^b Lev. 19:18 (Septuagint) ^c Ex. 20:14; Deut. 5:18 ^d Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17 ^e James seems to be presenting an argument posed by two hypothetical individuals. James himself does not fully agree with either position. Instead, he maintains that true faith is demonstrated by good deeds. ^f Although the words *I would respond* do not appear in the original text, they are implied. ^g Some manuscripts read *Do you believe that there is one God?* ^h The Greek term that has been translated person is gender inclusive. See also verse 24. ⁱ Some manuscripts read *Do you want proof that faith without deeds is dead?* ^j Or *father* ^k Or *justified*—see also verses 24 and 25. Although James and Paul both employ the same Greek term that has been rendered *deemed righteous* in verses 21, 24, and 25, they attach different meanings to it. For Paul, *justification* is God’s legal verdict that acquits the guilty sinner, and this verdict is received by faith alone. In contrast, James points to good deeds as the outward evidence of true faith. While these deeds merit nothing before God, they inevitably appear in the lives of all those who have living faith in Christ. These are the people who are deemed righteous by God. ^l See Gen. 22:1-19. ^m Gen. 15:6 ⁿ Some manuscripts read *spies*. ^o See Josh. 2.

CHAPTER 3

Not Many Should Be Teachers

(1) Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, because you can be certain that those of us who teach will be judged more strictly. (2) For all of us make many mistakes again and again.

Taming the Tongue

A person who never makes a mistake when he speaks is complete and is able to control his entire body. (3) If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can guide their entire bodies. (4) Or consider ships. Even though they are so large and are driven by stiff winds, a tiny rudder steers them wherever the pilot wants them to go.

(5) In the same way, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it is a great boaster. Think of how a little spark can set a huge forest on fire! (6) And the tongue is also a fire. Among the parts of the body, it is world of evil. It corrupts our entire body, inflaming our whole cycle of existence. And its flames are fed by hell itself.

(7) The human race can tame and actually has tamed all kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and sea creatures. (8) But no can tame the tongue. It is an uncontrollable evil, full of deadly poison. (9) We use it to praise the Lord^a and Father, and also to curse people^b who are made in God's likeness. (10) Out of the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, things should not be like this! (11) A spring doesn't pour fresh water and salt water from the same outlet, does it? (12) And a fig tree can't produce olives, or a grapevine figs, can it my brothers? Nor can a salty spring produce fresh water.

Wisdom from Above

(13) Who is wise and intelligent among you? Let him show by his good conduct that his deeds are performed with a humility that is derived from wisdom. (14) But if you are harboring bitter jealousy and rivalry in your hearts, don't go on boasting and being false to the truth. (15) This is not the kind of wisdom that comes down from above. No, it is earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. (16) For wherever jealousy and rivalry exist, there you will find disorder and every kind of evil.

(17) But the wisdom from above is pure first of all. It is also peaceful, gentle, submissive, full of mercy and good deeds, impartial, and sincere. (18) Those who keep cultivating peace are sowing a harvest of righteousness that results in peace.

^aSome manuscripts read *God*. ^bThe Greek term that has been translated *people* is gender inclusive.

CHAPTER 4

The Source of Fights and Quarrels

(1) What is the source of those fights and quarrels among you? Don't they stem from your desires for pleasure that constantly wage war within you? (2) You keep wanting what you don't have, so you commit murder. And you keep coveting what you can't get your hands on, so you quarrel and fight. You don't have what you want because you don't ask God for it. (3) Or you ask for something, but don't receive it because you ask for it with a wrong motive—so you can squander it on your own pleasures.

(4) You unfaithful people!^a Don't you realize that friendship with the world means hostility toward God? If anyone chooses the world's friendship, he is taking his stand as God's enemy. (5) Or do you think the scripture is meaningless when it says that the Spirit God implanted in us yearns jealously for us?^b (6) But God keeps giving us more grace. This is why the scripture also says,

“God opposes the proud,
but gives grace to the humble.”^c

(7) So submit to God. Take a firm stand against the devil, and he will flee from you. (8) Come close to God, and He will come close to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you doubters. (9) Be sorrowful, mourn, and cry. Change your laughter into mourning and your joy into gloom. (10) Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up.

Stop Slandering One Another

(11) Brothers, stop slandering one another. The person who makes it his practice to slander or judge his brother is actually slandering and condemning the law. Now if you are condemning the law, you are acting as its judge instead of obeying it. (12) But there is only one Lawgiver and Judge—the One Who can save and destroy. So who are you to judge your neighbor?

Don't Boast about Your Plans

(13) Listen here, you people who say, “Today or tomorrow we will make our way to such and such a town and spend a year there, trading and making money.” (14) You don't even know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? You are a puff of smoke that appears for a little while and then vanishes. (15) Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord's will, we will live to do this or that.” (16) But as it is, you keep making arrogant boasts. And all such boasting is evil.

(17) So if anyone knows what is right and doesn't do it, he is guilty of sin.

^a Literally, *Adulteresses!* ^b The meaning of the Greek in verse 5 is uncertain. Perhaps James had Ex. 20:5 in mind. ^c Prov. 3:34

CHAPTER 5

A Warning for Rich People

(1) Listen here, you rich people! Cry and howl over the miseries that are overtaking you. (2) Your wealth has rotted away, and your clothes have become food for moths. (3) Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. For you have hoarded up treasure in the last days.^a

(4) Look! The wages you have withheld from the workers who harvested your fields are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of the heavenly armies. (5) You have lived in luxury and self-indulgence on the earth. You have become fat in a time of slaughter. (6) You have condemned and murdered righteous people who were offering you no resistance.

Wait Patiently for Jesus

(7) Wait patiently, brothers, until the Lord comes. Think of how a farmer keeps waiting for the land to produce its precious crops, and how patient he is with them until they receive the early rains of autumn and the later rains of spring.^b (8) You also must wait patiently and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. (9) Stop grumbling about one another, brothers, or you will be condemned. Look! The Judge is standing at the door!

(10) Brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord as an example of suffering and patient endurance. (11) We consider those who endured to be blessed.^c You have heard about Job's endurance, and you know how Lord provided for him in the end. For the Lord is very merciful and compassionate.

Do Not Swear

(12) Above all, my brothers, stop swearing. Do not swear by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Just let your "Yes" mean yes and your "No" mean no, or you will come under condemnation.

The Power of Prayer

(13) Is anyone among you facing difficulty? He should continue to pray. Is anyone feeling happy? He should continue to sing praise songs. (14) Is anyone among you sick? He should call the elders of the church, and they should pray for him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. (15) And the prayer that is accompanied by faith will make the sick person well. The Lord will restore him to health, and any sins he has committed will be forgiven. (16) So keep confessing your sins to one another and praying for one another, and you will be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has a powerful effect. (17) Elijah was a human being^d like us, and when he prayed fervently that it wouldn't rain, no rain fell on the land for three and a half years. (18) Then he prayed again, and the sky provided rain, and the land produced its crops.

Saving Those Who Wander

(19) My brothers, if anyone among you wanders away from the truth and someone else brings him back, (20) remember that the one who turns a sinner from his error will save him from death and cover many sins.

^aOr . . . and will eat your flesh. Like fire, you have hoarded up treasure in the last days.

^bIn Palestine, crops are planted in the fall and harvested in the spring. The first autumn rains cause the seed to germinate, while the later spring rains bring the plants to maturity. ^cOr *happy*. ^dThe Greek term that has been translated *human being* is gender inclusive.

STUDY GUIDE

- (1) Who were the twelve tribes that were scattered abroad? (*James 1:1*)
- (2) What is the relationship between temptation and sin? How can temptation lead to sin? (*James 1:12-15*)
- (3) Why has the person who breaks one commandment become guilty of breaking the entire law? (*James 2:10*)
- (4) In what sense is God's law a law that brings freedom? (*James 2:12*)
- (5) Do Paul and James agree or disagree over the relationship between faith and deeds? (*Rom. 3:21-31; Eph. 2:8-10; James 2:14-26*)
- (6) How can we tame our tongues? (*Phil. 4:13; James 3:3-12*)

(7) What does friendship with the world involve? How can we be God's friends instead? (*James 4:4-6*)

(8) James spoke of the nearness of Christ's coming in his time. In what sense was Christ's coming imminent in the first century? (*James 5:8-9*)

(9) How can we have a powerful prayer life? (*James 5:13-18*)

1 Peter

CHAPTER 1

Greetings from Peter

(1) From Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ.

To God's chosen people who are scattered and living as foreigners in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.^a (2) In the foreknowledge of God the Father, you have been chosen to experience the sanctifying work of the Spirit—so you can obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood. May grace and peace be lavished on you!

A Living Hope

(3) Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy, He has given us new birth by raising Jesus Christ from the dead. This new birth leads to a living hope, (4) which awaits an inheritance that has been reserved for you in heaven—an inheritance that can never be destroyed or defiled, and that never fades away. (5) Through faith, you are being shielded by God's power until the appearance of His salvation, which is ready to be revealed in the last time.

(6) Now this should bring you great joy—although you may have to suffer various trials for a little while. (7) These trials prove that your faith is genuine, just as fire proves that gold is genuine. And after your faith is proven to be more valuable than perishable gold, it will result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

(8) Even though you didn't see Him,^b you continue to love Him. And even though you don't see Him at the present time, you continue to believe in Him. And you are filled with a glorious joy that is too great for words. (9) For you are receiving the goal of your faith—salvation for yourselves!

(10) Now the prophets who spoke about the grace that was intended for you searched this salvation out and investigated it carefully. (11) They were trying to learn about the time and circumstances^c to which the Spirit of Christ was pointing. For He was testifying within them and predicting the suffering of Christ and the glory that would follow.

(12) What is more, the prophets were shown that their service was not for their own benefit. No, they were serving you when they spoke about these things. And now the Holy Spirit, Who was sent from heaven, has empowered His evangelists to bring you the good news and announce these things to you—things that angels are longing to catch a glimpse of!

You Must Be Holy

(13) So prepare your minds for action. You must always be self-controlled. And you must fix your entire hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when He is revealed. (14) As His obedient children, you must not comply with the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.

(15) Instead, you must be holy in all your conduct—just like the Holy One Who called you. (16) For it is written, “You must be holy, because I am holy.”^d (17) And since you call on a Father Who judges each person’s deeds without showing favoritism, you must live your lives in reverent awe during the time you spend as strangers on the earth.

(18) For you are aware that you have been redeemed from the empty way of life you inherited from your ancestors. And this was not accomplished with perishable things like silver or gold, (19) but with the precious blood of Christ that resembles the blood of an unblemished and spotless lamb. (20) He was chosen before the creation of the world, but in these last times, He was revealed for your sake. (21) Through Him, you have come to trust in God, Who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory. And as a result, your faith and hope are anchored in God.

(22) Now since your lives have been purified by obeying the truth,^e you have the ability to show genuine brotherly love. And this means that your love for one another must be intense and must flow from pure^f hearts. (23) For you have been born again through God’s living and enduring word,^g—not from sperm that perishes, but from something that cannot perish. (24) For

“All people are like grass,
and all their glory is like a blossom in the grass.
The grass dries up, and the blossom falls off,
(25) but the word of the Lord endures forever.”^h

Now this word is the good news that was proclaimed to you.

^a These Roman provinces were all located in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). ^b Some manuscripts read *you didn't know Him*. ^c Or *the time and the Person* ^d Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2 (Septuagint) ^e Some manuscripts read *the truth through the Spirit*. ^f Some manuscripts omit *pure*. ^g Or *through the word of the living and enduring God*, ^h Isa. 40:6-8

CHAPTER 2

(1) So get rid of every kind of evil—no more deceit, hypocrisy, jealousy, or slander! (2) Like newborn babies, you must yearn for the pure spiritual milk that will help you grow up into salvation. (3) For surely you have tasted that the Lord is good.^a

The Priesthood of All Believers

(4) Now as you come to Christ (the living Stone that was rejected as worthless by human beings,^b but chosen by God and precious in His sight), (5) you also are like living stones that are being built into a spiritual house and a holy priesthood—to offer spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (6) For scripture contains these words:

“See, I am laying a Stone in Zion,
a chosen and precious Cornerstone.
And the person who believes in Him
will never be put to shame.”^c

(7) So this Stone is precious to you believers. But for those who don’t believe—

“The Stone the builders rejected
turned out to be the main Cornerstone^d—
(8) a Stone that makes them stumble,
and a great Rock that makes them fall.”^e

They keep stumbling because they make a practice of disobeying God’s word. For that is their appointed destiny.

(9) But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God. And because of this, you can tell others about the awesome deeds of the One Who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. (10) At one time, you were not God’s people, but now you are His people. At one time, you were excluded from God’s mercy, but now you are included.

Be God’s Servants

(11) Dear friends, as foreigners and exiles in this world, I urge you to avoid sinful desires that wage constant war against your spiritual lives. (12) Your conduct among the pagans should be so good that even though they are slandering you as evildoers at the present time, they will eventually have an opportunity to reflect on your good deeds and glorify God when He comes to visit us.

(13) For the Lord's sake, you must submit to every human authority—to the king as the supreme authority, (14) and to governors who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and honor those who do right. (15) For by doing good, God wants you silence the ignorant talk of foolish people.

(16) Now even though you are free, you must not use your freedom as an excuse to do wrong. Instead, be God's servants! (17) Show respect to everyone. Keep loving your Christian brothers. And make it your practice to fear God and honor the king.

(18) Household slaves must submit to their masters with complete respect, not only when their masters are good and kind, but also when they are harsh. (19) For whenever a person endures the pain of unjust suffering because his conscience is oriented toward God,^f it is a sign of grace. (20) What credit do you deserve if you endure a beating for doing wrong? But if you suffer for doing good, it is a sign that you have found grace in the sight of God.

(21) As a matter of fact, this is what you were called to do, because Christ suffered^g on your behalf and left an example for you to follow closely in His steps.

(22) "He never committed a sin,
and no deceit was found in His mouth."^h

(23) When He was being insulted, He did not retaliate. When He was suffering, He did not respond with threats. Instead, He committed everything to the One Who judges justly.

(24) Now it was Christ Himself Who carried away our sins in His body on the cross—so we could die to sin and live for righteousness! Yes, it is by His wounds that you have been healed.ⁱ (25) For you were like sheep that kept straying away.^j But now you have returned to the Shepherd and Supervisor^k of your lives.

^a An allusion to Ps. 34:8 ^b The Greek term that has been translated *human beings/people* in verses 4 and 15 is gender inclusive. ^c Isa. 28:16 ^d Ps. 118:22 ^e Isa. 8:14 ^f The meaning of the Greek is uncertain. ^g Some manuscripts read *died*. ^h Isa. 53:9 ⁱ Isa. 53:5 ^j An allusion to Isa. 53:6 ^k Traditionally, *Bishop*

CHAPTER 3

Wives and Husbands

(1) In the same way, you wives must submit to your husbands. Then, if some of your husbands are disobedient to God's word, they will be won over by the way you live without even talking about it. (2) For they will have an opportunity to reflect on your pure and reverent lives. (3) Don't make your beauty a matter of externals by braiding your hair or by wearing gold jewelry and fine clothes. (4) Instead, your beauty should come from the hidden person^a you are in your heart. It should be the enduring beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. (5) For this is how it was with the holy women of the past who put their hope in God. They used to make themselves beautiful by submitting to their husbands (6) like Sarah did. She obeyed Abraham and called him her master. And you are her daughters if you do what is right and refuse to give way to fear.

(7) In the same way, you husbands must show understanding as you continue living with your wives. You must make it your practice to honor them, not only because they are weaker than you are, but also because they are fellow heirs of the gracious gift of life. Then nothing will interfere with your prayers.

Suffering for Doing Right

(8) Finally, all of you must live in harmony. Practice sympathy; love one another as brothers, and show compassion and humility. (9) Never pay back evil for evil or insult for insult. Instead, respond with a blessing. For this is what you were called to do—so you could inherit a blessing.

(10) "If someone wants to love life
and enjoy good days,
he must keep his tongue from evil
and his mouth from speaking deceit.

(11) He must steer clear of evil
and do good;
he must seek peace
and pursue it.

(12) For the eyes of the Lord
are on the righteous,
and His ears are open
to their prayers.
But the Lord opposes those
who do wrong.^{7b}

(13) Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? (14) And even if you do suffer for what is right, you are blessed.^c So don't be afraid when other people threaten you, and don't be alarmed.^d

(15) But in your hearts, be sure to hallow Christ^e as Lord. Always be ready to provide a valid answer whenever someone asks you to explain the hope that you have. (16) However, you must do this with humility and reverence. Keep a clear conscience, so that those who make fun of your good conduct as Christians will feel ashamed whenever they slander you. (17) After all, if it is God's will, it is better to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

Christ Died for Your Sins

(18) For even Christ suffered for^f sins once and for all.^g As the Righteous One, He did this on behalf of wicked people—to bring you^h to God. He was put to death in the body, but made alive by the Spirit.ⁱ (19) And by the Spirit,^j He went and preached^k to the spirits in prison,^l (20) who were disobedient long ago when God was waiting patiently in the days of Noah. During that time, an ark was under construction, in which a few people (eight in number) were saved as they passed through water.^m

(21) Now that water was a symbol of baptism, which saves you at the present time. This is not accomplished by removing dirt from the body. No, baptism is a pledge to God from a clear conscience, and it saves you through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (22) He is at the right hand of God. And ever since He entered heaven, angels, authorities, and powers have submitted to Him.

^a The Greek term that has been translated *person* is gender inclusive. ^b Ps. 34:12-16
^c Or *happy*. ^d Some manuscripts omit *and don't be alarmed*. ^e Some manuscripts read *God*. ^f Some manuscripts insert *your* or *our*. ^g Some manuscripts read *For even Christ died for your/our sins once and for all*. ^h Some manuscripts read *us*. ⁱ Or *in spirit*. ^j Or *in spirit*, or *by His death and resurrection*, ^k Or *He went and made a proclamation* ^l Some expositors believe that these *spirits in prison* should be understood as fallen angels who were especially active during the time of Noah. Other expositors identify the *spirits in prison* with the wicked human inhabitants of the world at that time. Among this second group of expositors, some believe that Peter was using figurative language for Noah's Spirit-filled preaching to living people in his generation who were imprisoned by their sins. Others believe that between His death and resurrection, the soul of Christ descended into hell and proclaimed His victory to disembodied spirits from that generation. ^m Literally, *were saved through water*.

CHAPTER 4

Arm Yourselves with Christ's Attitude

(1) Therefore, since Christ suffered^a in His body, you must arm yourselves with the same attitude He had. For the One Who suffered in His body has finished dealing with sin.^b (2) So the rest of your earthly lives should not be controlled by sinful human^c desires, but by the will of God. (3) Enough of your time has already been spent on the activities that pagans crave. For your lives were devoted to unrestrained immorality, lust, drunkenness, wild celebrations, drinking parties, and disgusting idolatry.

(4) But now the pagans are surprised that you are no longer rushing into the same flood of wickedness with them, and they are slandering you. (5) Nevertheless, they will have to give an account to the One Who is ready to judge the living and the dead. (6) As a matter of fact, this is why the good news was once proclaimed to people who are dead now—so they could live by God's standards in their union with the Spirit, even though they were judged by human standards in their physical existence.^d

(7) The end of everything is near! So use good judgment, and keep your heads level for the benefit of your prayers. (8) Above all, continue to love one another fervently, because love covers many faults. (9) And show hospitality to one another without complaining.

(10) As faithful managers of God's grace in its various forms, each of you must serve one another with whatever spiritual gift you have received. (11) If anyone is a speaker, he must speak messages that come from God. If anyone is a minister, he must serve with the strength God provides. Then God will be praised in every way through Jesus Christ. Glory and power belong to Him forever and ever. Amen.

Suffering for Christ

(12) Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery trial you are suffering, as if something strange were happening to you. (13) But make it your practice to rejoice as you share in Christ's suffering, and you will be overwhelmed with joy when His glory is revealed.

(14) If you are enduring insults because of the name of Christ, you are blessed.^e For the glorious Spirit of God^f is resting^g on you.^h

(15) Of course, none of you should suffer for being murderers, thieves, criminals, or embezzlers.ⁱ (16) But if you suffer for being a Christian, you should not be ashamed. Instead, you should praise God by using that name. (17) For it is time

for the judgment to begin with the family of God.

And if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who refuse to heed^j God's good news?

(18) "If it is hard for a righteous person to be saved,
what will happen to ungodly people and sinners?"^k

(19) So then, those who are suffering in accordance with God's will should entrust their lives to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

^aSome manuscripts read *suffered for us*. ^bOr *For the person who has suffered in his body has finished dealing with sin*. However, this alternate reading is unlikely because it seems so contrary to fact. ^cThe Greek term that has been translated *human* in verses 2 and 6 is gender inclusive. ^dThe meaning of the Greek in the last part of verse 6 is uncertain. ^eOr *you are happy*. ^fSome manuscripts read *the glorious and powerful Spirit of God*. ^gSome manuscripts read *has rested*. ^hSome manuscripts add *On account of them, He is being blasphemed, but because of you, He is being praised*. ⁱOr *spies, or meddlers*—the meaning of the Greek is uncertain. ^jIn certain instances such as this, the meaning of the Greek verb that has been translated *heed* shades off in the direction of *believe*. ^kProv. 11:31

CHAPTER 5

To the Elders

(1) So as a fellow elder who witnessed Christ's suffering and who has a share in the glory to be revealed, I am making an appeal to the elders among you: (2) Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care. Continue giving it your supervision,^a not because you must, but willingly and under God's direction, not greedily, but with enthusiasm. (3) Don't dominate your people, but be examples to the flock. (4) And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Clothe Yourselves with Humility

(5) In the same way, you young people must submit to those who are older. And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility before one another. For

"God opposes the proud,
but gives grace to the humble."^b

(6) So God will exalt you in His own time—if you humble yourselves under His

mighty hand (7) by casting all your cares on Him. For He cares about you!

(8) Keep your heads level and be alert! Your enemy, the devil, is prowling around like a roaring lion, ready to devour his prey. (9) So be strong in your faith, and take a stand against him. For you are aware that your brothers throughout the world are enduring the same kind of suffering. (10) But after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, Who has called you to share His eternal glory in union with Christ,^c will restore you. He will make you firm and strong, and provide you with a good foundation. (11) Power belongs^d to Him forever.^e Amen.

Conclusion and Greeting

(12) I am writing this brief letter to you with the help of Silas,^f whom I regard as a faithful brother. I am writing to encourage you and to affirm that this letter contains God's true grace. Be sure to stand firm in it!

(13) The church in Babylon^g that was chosen by God along with you sends you greetings, and so does my son Mark.^h (14) Be sure to greet one another with a loving kiss. May all of you who are in union with Christ receive peace.ⁱ

^a Some manuscripts omit *Continue giving it your supervision*. ^b Prov. 3:34
^c Some manuscripts read *Christ Jesus*. ^d Some manuscripts read *Glory and power belong*. ^e Some manuscripts read *forever and ever*. ^f Literally, *Silvanus*.—*Silvanus* is the Roman form of the more familiar *Silas*. ^g Peter is probably using the name *Babylon* to refer to the city of Rome. ^h This was John Mark, the author of the second Gospel. ⁱ Some manuscripts read *May all of you who are in union with Christ Jesus receive peace. Amen*.

STUDY GUIDE

- (1) Why does God allow trials to test our faith? (*1 Pet. 1:6-7*)
- (2) Can you give some examples of Old Testament prophecies that predicted the suffering and glory of Christ? (*1 Pet. 1:11*)
- (3) How can our lives be purified by obeying the truth? Isn't obedience the result of moral purification? (*1 Pet. 1:22*)
- (4) What does the priesthood of all believers mean to you? In what sense are all Christians priests? How do priests differ from pastors? (*1 Pet. 2:4-10*)
- (5) What does it mean for a wife to submit to her husband? Is submission the same as obedience? Should wives obey their husbands? (*1 Pet. 3:1-6*)

(6) Was Peter opposed to wearing jewelry and fine clothes? Or was he simply saying that our true beauty should not be derived from these things? Do people commonly wear jewelry or fancy clothes in a prideful way or to draw attention to themselves? How should Christians dress? (*1 Pet. 3:3-4*)

(7) 1 Pet. 3:18-20 has puzzled many people. What do you think Peter is trying to tell us in this difficult passage?

(8) In what sense can it be said that baptism “saves” us? Some Christian denominations hold to what is called “baptismal regeneration”—the belief that God literally saves us through the sacrament of baptism. Other denominations reject this concept. What do you believe about baptism? Can you support your position with scripture? (*1 Pet. 3:21*)

(9) How does love cover many faults? (*1 Pet. 4:8*)

(10) What spiritual gift have you received, and how can you use it to serve others? (*1 Pet. 4:10*)

(11) How can we rejoice when we suffer? (*1 Pet. 4:12-13*)

(12) How can we take a stand against the devil? (*1 Pet. 5:8-9*)

2 Peter

CHAPTER 1

Greetings from Peter

(1) From Simon^a Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ.

To those who have received a gift of faith that is just as precious as ours—faith in the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.^b (2) May grace and peace be lavished on you as you grow in your knowledge of God and of Jesus^c our Lord.

A Call to Holy Living

(3) The divine power that comes from Jesus has provided us with everything we need for life and godliness. We have received this power because we know the One Who called us to His own glory and excellence.^d (4) And through the excellence of His glory, He has given us precious and magnificent promises. So since you have escaped the worldly corruption that is produced by evil desire, you can have a share in the divine nature through these promises.

(5) Now for this very reason, you must do your best to supplement your faith with an upright character, your upright character with knowledge, (6) your knowledge with self-control, your self-control with endurance, your endurance with godliness, (7) your godliness with brotherly love, and your brotherly love with total love for others. (8) If these qualities exist among you and are continually increasing, they will keep you from being useless and unproductive as you grow in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (9) But if a person lacks these qualities, he is willfully blind and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

(10) Therefore, my brothers, you must make every effort to be certain that God has called and chosen you. For you will never stumble in your faith if you continue to do this, (11) and abundant provision will be made for you to enter the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

(12) Now even though you are aware of these things and are firmly grounded in the truth that you currently possess, I will keep reminding you of them. (13) For as long as I am still alive,^e I consider it appropriate to refresh your memory. (14) I know that I will die soon,^f because our Lord Jesus Christ has revealed this to me. (15) But I will do my best to provide you with a way to keep these things in constant memory after I am gone.^g

Evidence for Christianity

(16) For we did not follow cleverly invented myths when we told you about the mighty coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. No, we saw His majesty with our own

eyes! (17) For He received honor and glory from God the Father when that voice from the majestic glory spoke these words to Him, “This is My Son, Whom I love; with Him, I am pleased.” (18) We heard that voice come from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.^h

(19) What is more, we have a prophetic message that is completely reliable,ⁱ and if you are paying attention to it, you are doing well. For it is like a lamp that continues to shine in a gloomy place—until the day dawns and the Morning Star rises in your hearts. (20) Above all, you must understand that no prophecy in scripture is derived from the prophet’s own imagination. (21) For prophecy was never produced by human^j whim. On the contrary, people were moved by the Holy Spirit as they spoke messages that came from God.

^aThe better manuscripts read *Simeon*, which is a variant of Simon. ^b Or *To those who have received a gift of faith through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ—faith that is just as precious as ours.* ^c Some manuscripts read *Jesus Christ.* ^d Some manuscripts read *Who has called us through glory and excellence.* ^e Literally, *For as long as I am in this tent,* ^f Literally, *I know that the removal of my tent will be soon,* ^g According to the church father Eusebius, Peter provided Mark with much of the information that he included in his Gospel, and it has been suggested that verse 15 alludes to this. ^h Verses 17-18 are an allusion to the transfiguration. See Matt. 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8, and Luke 9:28-36. ⁱ Or *that is even more reliable,* ^j The Greek term that has been translated *human/people* in verse 21 is gender inclusive.

CHAPTER 2

The Fate of False Teachers

(1) Now just as there were false prophets among the ancient^a people, there will also be false teachers among you. They will quietly introduce divisive doctrines that lead to ruin, and since they deny the Master Who bought them, they will bring swift destruction on themselves. (2) Yet many people will follow their immoral lifestyle, and because of these false teachers, the way of truth will be slandered. (3) As a matter of fact, in their greed, they will exploit you with clever fabrications. But the verdict of old is hard on their heels, and destruction waits for them with sleepless eyes.

(4) For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but threw them into the gloomy pits^b of Tartarus,^c to be held for judgment,^d (5) and if He did not spare the ancient world when He brought the flood on its ungodly inhabitants—even though He protected eight people, including Noah, who was a preacher of righteousness—(6) and if by burning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes, He condemned

them and made them an example of what is coming on the ungodly, (7) and if He rescued Lot, a righteous man who was greatly distressed by the immoral conduct of lawless people—(8) for this righteous man was living in their society, and day after day, the sights and sounds of their lawless deeds were bringing torture to his heart—(9) then the Lord knows how to rescue devout people from their trials, while He holds the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment.

(10) This applies especially to those who indulge the corrupt desires of the sinful nature and show contempt for divine authority. Such people are bold and arrogant, and are not afraid to slander glorious beings. (11) Yet even angels, who are much more powerful than these false teachers, do not condemn them with insults in the presence of the Lord.^e

(12) But these people make a practice of slandering anything they don't understand. Like irrational animals, they are creatures of instinct who were born to be captured and killed. And like mortal animals, they will be destroyed. (13) They are being paid back with wrong for the wrong they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to throw wild parties in broad daylight. They are stains and blemishes who indulge in their deceptions^f while they feast with you. (14) They have eyes for nothing but immoral women, and they can't get enough of sin. They lead unstable people into traps and are experts in greed. What a cursed brood they are!

(15) They have abandoned the straight road and have wandered off to follow the path of Balaam, the son of Bosor,^g who loved the reward he would get for doing wrong. (16) But he was rebuked for his lawlessness when a mute pack animal spoke with a human^h voice and restrained the prophet's madness.

(17) These teachers are wells without water and mists before a driving windstorm. They are bound for gloomy darkness! (18) By spouting empty boasts and by appealing to the immoral desires of the sinful nature, they trap people who are just escaping from those who live in error. (19) They promise these people freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity. For a person has been enslaved by anything that conquers him.

(20) If they once escaped the world's corruption by coming to know ourⁱ Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, but have again become entangled and defeated by it, their last condition is worse than their first. (21) It would have been better for them if they had never known the way of righteousness than to gain a knowledge of it and then turn their backs on the holy commandment that was entrusted to them. (22) The proverbs that describe their condition are true: "A dog returns to its own vomit,"^j and "a sow that is washed goes back to rolling in the mud."

^aAlthough the word *ancient* does not appear in the original text, it has been added for clarification. ^b Some manuscripts read *but committed them to the gloomy chains*. ^c In Greek mythology, *Tartarus* was the abode of the Titans and other wicked dead. Peter seems to be using *Tartarus* metaphorically here. ^d This is probably an allusion to the apocryphal book of 1 Enoch. 1 Enoch 10:4 speaks of sinful angels being placed in Tartarus. ^e Some manuscripts read *from the Lord*.

^f Some manuscripts read *agape feasts*. Among the early Christians, the Lord's Supper was commonly celebrated along with a meal. This meal was called an agape or love feast. Some Christians still have agape feasts today. ^g For the story of Balaam, see Num. 22-24. In Num. 22:5, Balaam is said to be the son of Beor. Although some manuscripts read *Beor* in 2 Pet. 2:15, the better manuscripts read *Bosor*. ^h The Greek term that has been translated *human* is gender inclusive. ⁱ Some manuscripts read *the*. ^j Prov. 26:11

CHAPTER 3

Scoffers in the Last Days

(1) Dear friends, this is already the second letter I have written to you, and I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate your minds to wholesome thinking. (2) I want you to remember the predictions that were made by the holy prophets and the commandment that was given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.

(3) Above all, you must realize that in the last days, scoffers will come with their mockery. They will follow their own impulses (4) and say, "Where is that 'coming' He promised? Ever since our ancestors^a fell asleep,^b everything has remained the same since the beginning of creation." (5) But they deliberately ignore the fact that by God's word, the heavens^c existed long ago, and the land^d was compacted out of water and through water. (6) And through the action of God's word, that ancient world was flooded with water and destroyed. (7) Moreover, by the same word, the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire and are being kept for the day when ungodly people^e will be judged and destroyed.

The Promise of Christ's Coming

(8) But don't forget this one thing, dear friends! With the Lord, a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. (9) The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some people think of slowness. Instead, He is being patient for your sake.^f He doesn't want anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

(10) The day of the Lord will come like a thief. On that day, the heavens will disappear with a crackling roar; the elements will be dissolved by heat, and the earth and the works that are in it will be laid bare.^g

(11) Now since everything will be dissolved in this way, what kind of people should you be? Your conduct should be holy and devout, (12) as you look forward to the day of God and hasten its coming.^h When that day comes, the heavens will be dissolved by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. (13) But we are

looking forward to the new heavens and new earth that He has promised, where righteousness will be at home! (14) So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to these things, do your best to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with Him. (15) Think of our Lord's patience as an opportunity to be saved, just as our dear brother Paul indicated when he wrote to you with the wisdom God gave him. (16) He speaks about these matters in all his letters. Now some of the things in his letters are hard to understand, and ignorant and unstable people keep distorting them to their own destruction, as they do the rest of the scriptures.

(17) Therefore, dear friends, since you already know these things, you must always be on your guard, so you won't be swept away by the error of lawless people and fall from your safe position. (18) Instead, you must continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory, both now and to the days of eternity.¹

^a Or *fathers* ^b For Peter, *sleep* was a euphemism for death. ^c Or *the sky*—this applies to each use of *heavens* in this chapter. ^d Or *the earth* ^e The Greek term that has been translated *people* is gender inclusive. ^f Some manuscripts read *He is being patient toward you*. Other manuscripts read *He is being patient toward us*. ^g Some manuscripts read *will be burned up*. ^h By sharing the good news with others, Christians can hasten Christ's return. See Matt. 24:14. ⁱ Some manuscripts conclude with the word *Amen*.

STUDY GUIDE

(1) Some Bible scholars have questioned whether this epistle was actually written by Peter. What evidence can you provide that supports Peter's authorship of the epistle?

(2) How can we be certain that God has called and chosen us? (*2 Pet. 1:10; 1 John 5:11-13*)

(3) Do you think Peter's evidence for the Christian faith is convincing? (*2 Pet. 1:16-21*)

(4) Who were the false teachers that Peter mentions? Do you think they were Gnostics? (*2 Pet. 2*)

(5) Who were the angels who sinned? Is Peter referring to the angels who followed Satan in his rebellion against God or to certain angels who sinned before the flood? According to 1 Enoch, the "sons of God" were angels who were punished in Tartarus for marrying human women. Did this really happen? Could Peter be alluding to a book that he considered a "clever fabrication" (1 Enoch) to illustrate the reality of God's judgment? (*Gen. 6:1-2; 2 Pet. 2:1-4, 9*)

(6) Two thousand years have passed since Jesus was on earth. Why hasn't He returned yet? (2 Pet. 3:8-9)

(7) What does Peter mean when he says that "the day of the Lord will come like a thief"? (2 Pet. 3:10)

(8) How will the earth and the works that are in it be laid bare at Christ's return? (2 Pet. 3:10)

1 John

CHAPTER 1

The Word of Life

(1) We are writing about the Word of Life^a—

that was there from the beginning,
that we have heard,
that we have seen with our own eyes,
that we looked at and felt with our own hands.

(2) This Life was revealed; we have seen It and continue to testify about It! And we are giving you an account of the Eternal Life that was in communion with the Father and was revealed to us. (3) Yes, we are giving you an account of what we have seen and heard, so that you also can have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. (4) We are writing these things to make our own joy complete.^b

God Is Light

(5) This is the message that we have heard from Him and are conveying to you: God is Light, and there is no darkness at all in Him. (6) If we claim to have fellowship with Him, while we go on living in the darkness, we are lying and not practicing the truth. (7) But if we are living in the light, just as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.

No One Is Sinless

(8) If we claim to have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (9) If we keep confessing our sins, the One Who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (10) If we claim that we have not sinned, we are making a liar out of Him, and His word is not in us.

^aOr *the Word that gives life* ^b Some manuscripts read *We are writing these things to you, to make your own joy complete.*

CHAPTER 2

Christ Our Advocate

(1) My dear children, I am writing these things to you so you won't sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate Who pleads for us in the Father's presence—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. (2) He is the Sacrifice that deflects God's holy anger from our sins—and not only from ours, but also from the sins of the whole world.

Love and Obedience

(3) If we keep obeying God's commandments, we can be sure that we have come to know Him. (4) The person who claims he has come to know Him without obeying His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. (5) But if anyone obeys His word, God's love has truly reached its goal in him. This is how we can know that we are living in union with Him. (6) The person who claims to remain in union with Him should continue to live the same way Christ did.

(7) Dear friends,^a I am not writing a new commandment for you. No, I am writing an old one that you have had from the beginning. This old commandment is the message you have heard.^b (8) Then again, I am writing a new commandment for you, and what I am writing is realized in Christ and in your own experience. For the darkness is fading away, and the real Light is already shining.

(9) The person who claims to be in the light while he hates his brother is still in the darkness. (10) The person who loves his brother is living in the light, and faith encounters no stumbling block in him. (11) The person who hates his brother is in the darkness, and even though he keeps walking in the darkness, he has no idea where he is going because the darkness has blinded him.

John's Purpose in Writing

(12) I am writing to tell you, dear children,
that your sins have been forgiven
because of the name of Christ.

(13) I am writing to tell you, fathers,
that you have known the One
Who has existed from the beginning.
I am writing to tell you, young men,
that you have overcome the evil one.

(14) I am writing to tell you, dear children,
that you have known the Father.

I am writing to tell you, fathers,
that you have known the One
Who has existed from the beginning.
I am writing to tell you, young men,
that you are strong,
that God's word remains in you,
and that you have overcome the evil one.

Stop Loving the World

(15) Stop loving the world and the things that are in it. If anyone keeps loving the world, the Father's love is not in him. (16) For everything in the world—the desire produced by the sinful nature, the desire produced by what the eyes see, and the arrogance that stems from a selfish lifestyle—does not originate with the Father, but with the world. (17) Now the world and its desires are fading away, but the person who does God's will lives forever.

A Warning about Antichrists

(18) Dear children, this is the last hour, and you have heard that Antichrist^c is coming. But even now, many antichrists have appeared, and this is how we know it is the last hour. (19) They left us, but they never really belonged to our fellowship. If they had belonged to it, they would have remained with us. However, the fact that they left makes it clear that none of them really belonged to it.

(20) Now you have been anointed by the Holy One, and all of you know the truth.^d (21) I am not writing to tell you that you are ignorant of the truth. I am writing to tell you that you know it, and that lies are never derived from the truth. (22) The person who denies that Jesus is the Christ^e is the ultimate liar. He is the Antichrist, because he denies both the Father and the Son. (23) No one who denies the Son has the Father. Anyone who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

Union with Christ

(24) The message you have heard from the beginning must remain in you. If it does, you will remain in union with both the Son and the Father. (25) And this is the promise He gave us^f—eternal life!

(26) I am writing these things about the people who are trying to lead you astray. (27) But as for you, the anointing^g you received from Christ remains with you, and you don't need anyone to teach you. Instead, His anointing keeps teaching you everything. And since His anointing is real and not counterfeit, you must remain in union with Him, just as He taught you.^h

(28) Even now, dear children, you must remain in union with Christ. Then we can have confidence when He appears, and we won't flee in shame from Him at

His coming.

(29) If you know that He is righteous, you also know that everyone who keeps doing right has been born of Him.

^a Some manuscripts read *Brothers*. ^b Some manuscripts read *you have heard from the beginning*. ^c Or *an antichrist*—some manuscripts read *the Antichrist*. It should be noted that the prefix *anti* can mean *in place of* as well as *against*. ^d Literally, *and all of you know*—the direct object *truth* is strongly implied by verse 21. Some manuscripts read *and you know everything*. ^e The Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. ^f Some manuscripts read *you*. ^g John is probably referring to the anointing of the Holy Spirit. ^h See John 15:1-11.

CHAPTER 3

Sin's Power Is Broken

(1) Consider the awesome love the Father has lavished on us—that we are called God's children! And that is exactly what we are! This explains why the world does not recognize us—it did not recognize Him. (2) At the present time, dear friends, we are God's children, and what we will become has not been revealed yet. We only know that when Christ is revealed,^a we will be like Him, because we will see Him as He really is. (3) Everyone who has this hope in Christ keeps himself pure, just as Christ is pure.

(4) Everyone who keeps committing sin is practicing lawlessness. In fact, sin is lawlessness! (5) Now you are aware that Christ appeared to take away sins,^b and there isn't any sin in Him. (6) No one who remains in union with Christ continues to sin. No one who goes on sinning has seen Him or known Him.

(7) Dear children, don't let anyone lead you astray. The person who keeps doing right is righteous, just as Christ is righteous. (8) The person who keeps committing sin belongs to the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. This is why the Son of God appeared. He came to destroy the devil's work. (9) No one who has been born of God keeps committing sin, because God's new life^c remains in him. He can't continue sinning, because he has been born of God.

We Should Love One Another

(10) This is how we can distinguish between God's children and the devil's children: Anyone who keeps refusing to do right by loving his brother does not belong to God. (11) For this is the message you have heard from the beginning—we must love one another!

(12) Don't be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and slaughtered his brother. And why did he slaughter him? Because his own deeds were evil, while his brother's were righteous. (13) So don't be surprised, brothers, if the world hates you.

(14) We know that we have already passed from the realm of death into the realm of life because we love our brothers. The person who refuses to love remains in the realm of death. (15) Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you are aware that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.

(16) This is how we know the meaning of love—Jesus Christ laid down His life on our behalf. And we have a moral obligation to lay down our lives on behalf of our brothers. (17) How can God's love remain in a person who has material possessions, if he sees his brother in need and refuses to show him pity? (18) Dear children, love should not be a matter of lip service. Instead, we should put our love into action and make it real! (19) Then we will know that we belong to the truth, and our consciences will find assurance in God's presence (20) whenever they condemn us. For God is greater than our consciences, and He knows everything.

(21) Dear friends, if our consciences do not condemn us,^d we can have confidence in God's presence (22) and receive anything we request from Him. For we are obeying His commandments and doing what pleases Him. (23) And this is His commandment—that we believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and that we love one another as He commanded us. (24) The person who keeps obeying God's commandments remains in union with God, and God remains in union with him.

Now this is how we know that God remains in union with us—we know it by the Spirit He gave us.

^aOr *when it is revealed*. ^b Some manuscripts read *our sins*. ^c Literally, *God's seed*
^d In verse 21, the words *our* and *us* are omitted by various manuscripts. Some manuscripts omit one word and not the other, while other manuscripts omit both words. However, there are also many manuscripts that include both words in their readings. Even if these words were not originally present in the text, they are implied.

CHAPTER 4

Test the Spirits

(1) Dear friends, don't believe every spirit. But test the spirits to find out if they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

(2) This is how you can recognize God's Spirit: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. (3) But any spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus^a is not from God. This is the spirit of the Antichrist, whom you have heard is coming. And now he is already in the world.

(4) Dear children, you belong to God, and you have successfully resisted these false prophets. For the One Who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.^b (5) These people belong to the world, and that explains why they speak worldly language and why the world listens to them. (6) We belong to God, and the person who knows God listens to us. But anyone who does not belong to God refuses to listen to us. This is how we can distinguish between the Spirit^c of truth and the spirit of falsehood.

God Is Love

(7) Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, because love comes from God. Everyone who is loving has been born of God and knows God. (8) The person who is unloving does not know God, because God is love.

(9) Now God has revealed His love among us by sending His one and only Son into the world, so we could live through Him. (10) This is the essence of love: We have not loved God, but He loved us and sent His Son as a Sacrifice, to deflect His anger from our sins.

(11) Dear friends, if this is the way God loved us, we also have an obligation to love one another. (12) No one has ever seen God. But if we continue to love one another, God remains in union with us, and His love has reached its goal among us. (13) We know we remain in union with God, and He remains in union with us, because He has given us a portion of His Spirit. (14) We have seen this for ourselves, and we continue to testify that the Father sent His Son to be the Savior of the world. (15) If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in union with him, and he remains in union with God.

(16) We have experienced the love that God has shown among us, and we have put our trust in it. God is love, and the person who is living in love remains in union with God, and God remains in union with him. (17) This is how love has reached its goal among us. And as a result, we can have confidence on the day of judgment, because while we are in this world, we resemble God.

(18) There is no fear where love exists. Instead, mature love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment. The person who is living in fear does not have mature love. (19) We love^d because God first loved us. (20) If anyone claims to love God while he hates his brother, he is a liar. As a matter of fact, if a person does not love his brother whom he has seen, he cannot love God Whom he has not seen.^e

(21) Now Christ has given us this commandment: The person who loves God must also love his brother.

^a Some manuscripts read *that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.* ^b John is contrasting the power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians with the power of Satan in the world. ^c Or *spirit* ^d Some manuscripts read *We love God.* ^e Some manuscripts read *how can he love God Whom he has not seen?*

CHAPTER 5

Faith Has Overcome the World

(1) Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ^a has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child as well.^b (2) We are aware that we love God's children when we love God and obey His commandments. (3) In fact, loving God means obeying His commandments.

Now His commandments never weigh us down, (4) because everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. What is the victory that has overcome the world? It is our faith! (5) Who is the person who overcomes the world? It is the person who believes that Jesus is the Son of God!

By Water and Blood

(6) Jesus Christ is the One Who came by water and blood. He did not come by water alone, but by water and blood. Now the Spirit keeps testifying about this, because the Spirit is the truth. (7) For there are three witnesses: (8) the Spirit, the water, and the blood.^c And these three are in agreement.^d

Assurance of Eternal Life

(9) We accept human^e testimony, but the testimony of God is even greater. For it is God's own testimony that He has given about His Son. (10) The person who believes in the Son of God holds firmly to this testimony. The person who refuses to believe has made God out to be a liar. For he has not believed the testimony that God has given about His Son.

(11) Now this is the testimony—God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.^f (12) The person who has the Son has life. The person who does not have the Son of God does not have life. (13) I am writing these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so you can know that you have eternal life.^g

Further Assurance

(14) If we ask for anything that is according to God's will, we can approach Him with confidence because He always listens to us. (15) And since we know that He

always listens to our requests, we can be certain that we already have the things we have asked Him for.

(16) If anyone sees his brother committing a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray that God will give^b his brother life. This applies to people who are committing sins that do not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death, and I am not telling you to pray about that. (17) All wrongdoing is sin, and yet there are sins that do not lead to death.ⁱ

(18) We know that anyone who has been born of God does not continue to sin. Instead, the person who was born of God keeps himself under guard,^j and the evil one cannot gain a hold on him.

(19) We know that we belong to God, and we know that the entire world lies under the control of the evil one. (20) We also know that the Son of God has come and has given us insight to recognize the One Who is real.^k And we are in union with the One Who is real. For we are in union with His Son, Jesus Christ. He is the real God, and He is eternal life!

(21) Dear children, be on your guard against idols!^l

^aThe Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. ^bIf we really love someone who is a parent, it is only natural that we will love that person's children and be kind to them. In the same way, if we love God, we will also love His people. ^cA few late manuscripts read (7) *For there are three witnesses in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one.* (8) *And there are three witnesses on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood.* Although these words about the Trinity are true, it is certain that they were not written by John. ^dAt the time John was writing, some false teachers known as Gnostics were claiming that the heavenly "Christ" descended on the earthly Jesus at His baptism and withdrew shortly before His crucifixion. To combat this false teaching, John affirmed that it was "Jesus Christ" Who passed through the water of baptism and the bloody crucifixion. The Holy Spirit keeps testifying to the real identity of Jesus Christ, and so do these two events. ^eThe Greek term that has been translated *human* is gender inclusive. ^fThis statement is filled with meaning, as it indicates that the good news is both objective (focused outside of us) and historical. Eternal life is not in us; it is outside of us in the Person of Jesus Christ. At a particular point in history, God opened the treasure chest of the universe and gave us eternal life. He gave us this gift when Jesus died for us. So if we want eternal life, we must not look for it in any good works that we perform or in any subjective experience we may have. Our eternal life is now heaven, in the Person of Jesus Christ, and if we lay hold of Him by faith, eternal life is ours! ^gSome manuscripts add *and so you can believe in the name of the Son of God*. ^hThe meaning of the Greek is uncertain. ⁱThe sin that leads to death is the persistent rejection of the Holy Spirit's call to accept Christ by faith. This is often termed "the sin against the Holy Spirit" or "the unpardonable sin." Other sins do not lead to

death, provided that the repentant sinner exercises faith in Christ and accepts His gift of forgiveness. However, all sin is serious, and any sin can lead to death if a person cherishes it and refuses to repent. This is why John urges Christians to pray for their fellow believers when they fall into sin. And since all Christians struggle with besetting sins every day, we need to pray for one another on a regular basis. ^j Some manuscripts read *the One who was born of God continues to guard him*,. ^k Some manuscripts read *the real God*. ^l Some manuscripts conclude with the word *Amen*.

STUDY GUIDE

- (1) What do you know about the Gnostic heresy? How do the history and theology of Gnosticism help us understand the language and theology of 1 John?
- (2) What does John mean when he says that Christ pleads for us in the Father's presence? Is the Father an angry Person Who needs to be appeased by the gentle Jesus? (*1 John 2:1*)
- (3) How does Christ's sacrifice deflect God's anger from our sins? (*1 John 2:2*)
- (4) In what sense is John's message an old commandment? In what sense is it a new commandment? (*1 John 2:7-8*)
- (5) John probably wrote his epistles near the end of the first century. Why did he speak of his time as "the last hour?" Could Jesus have returned in John's lifetime? Why do you think Jesus has waited so long to come again? (*1 John 2:18*)
- (6) Is there one Antichrist, or are there many antichrists? Could there be one big Antichrist and many little antichrists? (*1 John 2:18*)
- (7) Why is it so awesome to be God's child? (*1 John 3:1*)
- (8) How does God's law help us understand what sin is? (*1 John 3:4*)
- (9) How can the power of sin be broken in the life of a Christian? (*1 John 3:4-9; 5:18*)
- (10) How is Christ's sacrifice a demonstration of love? (*1 John 3:16*)
- (11) Can you give some practical examples of how we can "put our love into action and make it real?" (*1 John 3:18*)

(12) Why is it so important to acknowledge that Jesus Christ came in the flesh? How did the doctrine of Christ's humanity refute the teaching of the Gnostics? Why is Christ's humanity important for us today? (*1 John 4:2*)

(13) What does John mean when he says that God is love? (*1 John 4:8, 16*)

(14) What is the relationship between love and obedience? (*1 John 5:2-3*)

(15) Many religious people believe that God is to be found in our hearts. If we really want to find God, why do we need to look outside ourselves? (*1 John 5:11*)

(16) How can we be certain that we have eternal life? (*1 John 5:11-13*)

(17) How can we be on our guard against idols? (*1 John 5:21*)

2 John

Opening Greeting

(1) From the elder.

To the chosen lady and her children,^a whom I truly love. And I'm not the only one who loves you. All those who know the truth also love you. (2) We love you because the truth remains among us and will be with us forever. (3) As we live in love and truth, the grace, mercy, and peace that come from God the Father and from Jesus Christ,^b the Father's Son, will be ours.

Truth, Love, and Obedience

(4) I was very happy to find that some of your children are living in the truth, just as the Father commanded us. (5) And now, dear lady, I am not writing a new commandment for you. No, this is one that we have had from the beginning. I am asking that we continue to love one another. (6) And this is love—that we continue to live in obedience to His commandments. This is the commandment you have heard from the beginning, and you must live by it.

Beware of Deceivers

(7) For many deceivers, who refuse to acknowledge that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, have gone out into the world. This is the mark of the deceiver and the antichrist! (8) So see to it that you don't lose the teachings we^c worked to establish, but that you receive your full reward.

(9) Anyone who keeps pressing ahead without remaining rooted in the teaching of Christ does not have God. The person who remains in His^d teaching has both the Father and the Son. (10) If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not welcome him into your home or even greet him. (11) For the person who greets him shares in his evil deeds.

Conclusion and Greeting

(12) I have many things to write to you, but I have no desire to use papyrus and ink. Instead, I am hoping to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our^e joy can be complete.

(13) The children of your chosen sister send their greetings.^f

^a Although it is possible that John was writing to a literal woman and her children, it is much more likely that the *chosen lady* was a Christian congregation and that *her children* were church members. ^b Some manuscripts read *from the Lord Jesus Christ*. ^c Some manuscripts read *you*. ^d Although the word *His* does not appear in the original text, it has been added for clarification. ^e Some manuscripts read *your*. ^f Verse 13 may refer to the actual sister of the *chosen lady* mentioned in verse 1. However, it is probable that a sister congregation and its members are intended. Some manuscripts conclude with the word *Amen*.

STUDY GUIDE

- (1) Why do you think that this little epistle was included in the Bible?
- (2) What is the relationship between love and obedience? (*2 John 6*)
- (3) Why did many people doubt the humanity of Jesus Christ? Why was the denial of His humanity so serious? (*2 John 7, 8*)
- (4) Do verses 10 and 11 imply that we should be discourteous to false teachers?

3 John

Opening Greeting

(1) From the elder.

To my dear friend Gaius,^a whom I truly love.

Words of Encouragement

(2) Dear friend, I keep praying that you will prosper in every way and enjoy good health, just as your spiritual life is prospering. (3) I was very happy when some brothers arrived and testified about your faithfulness and how you are living in the truth. (4) Nothing brings me greater joy than to hear that my children are living in the truth.

(5) Dear friend, you are being faithful in the work you are doing for the brothers,^b even though they are strangers to you. (6) They have testified before the church about your love, so please send them on their way in a manner that meets God's approval. (7) After all, they set out in the name of Christ, and they are receiving no help from the Gentiles. (8) This is why we are under a continual obligation to support such people—so we can become fellow workers in spreading the truth.

Diotrephes and Demetrius

(9) I wrote out some instructions for the church, but Diotrephes,^c who loves to be first, is refusing to accept what we say. (10) So when I come, I will bring up what he is doing—spouting wicked nonsense about us. But he isn't satisfied with that! He keeps refusing to welcome the brothers, and he constantly hinders those who want to welcome them and tries to drive them out of the church.

(11) Dear friend, don't be an imitator of evil. Be an imitator of good. The person who continues to do good is from God. The person who continues to do evil has never seen God. (12) Demetrius^d has received positive testimony from everyone—even from truth itself. We are also adding our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true.

Conclusion and Greeting

(13) I had many things to tell you when I began to write, but I have no desire to do it with pen and ink. (14) Instead, I am hoping to see you very soon and talk with you face to face.

(15) Peace be with you! The friends^e here send their greetings. Greet each of the friends by name.

^a*Gaius* was a common name in the Roman Empire, and although the name appears several times in the New Testament, nothing more is known about this particular individual. ^b It seems that these *brothers* were traveling missionaries who received help from various Christian congregations. ^c *Diotrephes* is a Greek

name that means “nourished by Zeus.” Although it is possible that Diotrephes was promoting false doctrine, John does not mention this. However, it is clear that Diotrephes was a proud, self-centered individual. ^d *Demetrius* means “belonging to Demeter,” the goddess of agriculture. Although Demetrius was a faithful Christian, we know nothing more about him. ^e It seems that John used the term *friends* to refer to his fellow Christians.

STUDY GUIDE

- (1) Why do you think that this little epistle was included in the Bible?
- (2) Do you think God is interested in our physical health? (*3 John 2*)
- (3) What does it mean to live in the truth? (*3 John 3, 4*)
- (4) How can we imitate good instead of evil? (*3 John 11*)

Jude

Greetings from Jude

(1) From Jude,^a a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James.

To those who are called. You have been loved by^b God the Father and kept for^c Jesus Christ. (2) May mercy, peace, and love be lavished on you!

A Warning about False Teachers

(3) Dear friends, I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share. But now I feel compelled to write about something else. I am urging you to defend the faith that was once and for all entrusted to God's holy people. (4) For some godless intruders have wormed their way in among you. These people were marked out long ago for the condemnation I am about to describe. They are turning God's grace into an excuse for lewd conduct and are denying Jesus Christ, our only Sovereign and Lord.

Examples of God's Judgment

(5) Now even though you are aware of all this, I want to remind you that on one occasion, the Lord rescued^d a people from the land of Egypt. But afterward, He destroyed those who refused to believe. (6) You also know about the angels who did not keep their positions of authority, but abandoned their place of residence. So the Lord has kept them in gloom and eternal chains, and they are ready for judgment on the great day. (7) Likewise, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural lust.^e Their behavior resembled what those angels did, and by suffering the penalty of eternal fire, they are on display as an example.

The Attributes of False Teachers

(8) In the same way, these dreamers continue to defile their bodies, flout divine authority, and slander glorious beings. (9) In contrast, when Michael the archangel^f was debating with the devil and arguing about the body of Moses,^g he was not presumptuous enough to bring an insulting message of condemnation. Instead, he exclaimed, "May the Lord rebuke you!"

(10) But these people make a habit of slandering anything they don't understand. And they are being corrupted by the very things that, like irrational animals, they grasp by instinct. (11) Woe to them! They have gone the way of Cain, and because of their greed for money, they have plunged headlong into Balaam's error. So they will perish in Korah's rebellion!

(12) They are dangerous, jutting shoals^h at your agape feasts.ⁱ They eat with you without the slightest reverence, and they care only for themselves. They are clouds that are driven along by the wind without offering any rain. They are fruitless trees in late fall—twice dead and uprooted. (13) They are sea waves that foam up their shameful deeds, wandering stars that are bound for an eternity of

gloomy darkness.

(14) Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied to them:

“See! The Lord is coming with great numbers of His holy ones.

(15) He will pronounce judgment on everyone, and He will convict these ungodly sinners of all the ungodly deeds they have committed and of all the harsh words they have spoken against Him.”^j

(16) These people are grumblers and complainers who follow their own desires. They speak arrogant words and flatter others to take advantage of them.

Counsel for Faithful Christians

(17) But as for you, dear friends, you must remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ predicted. (18) They used to tell you that there will be scoffers in the last times who will follow their own godless desires. (19) These are the people who are causing divisions among you. They are controlled by their own natural instincts because they don’t have the Spirit.

(20) Now as for you, dear friends, keep building yourselves up in your most holy faith, and continue to pray in your union with the Holy Spirit. (21) Be sure to remain in God’s love while you are looking forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that brings eternal life. (22) Some people have doubts, so be merciful to them. (23) Save others by snatching them out of the fire. To still another group of people, you must show mercy mingled with fear, while you hate the very clothes that have been stained by their sinful natures.^k

Doxology

(24) Praise be to the One Who can keep you from stumbling and make you stand before His glorious presence, blameless and filled with joy. (25) To the only God, Who saves us through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority—before time began, now and forever. Amen.

^a Literally, *Judas—Jude* is a variant of Judas. He was one of the brothers of our Lord Jesus Christ. ^b Or *in your union with* ^c Or *by* ^d Some manuscripts read *Now even though you were once familiar with all this, I want to remind you that Jesus rescued.* ^e Literally, *other flesh.* ^f *Michael the archangel* is also mentioned in Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1, and Rev. 12:7. Expositors have expressed different opinions regarding the identity of Michael. Most expositors have identified Michael as God’s foremost angel, or at least as one of His leading angels. In fact, ancient Jewish interpreters often portrayed Michael as one of seven archangels. However, there is also a minority opinion that equates Michael with Jesus Christ. Although this opinion has sometimes played a role in efforts to undermine belief in the Deity of Christ, it can also be held as an orthodox position, provided that Christ’s true Deity is not compromised and that the term “archangel” is taken to mean “first” or “primary Messenger.”

^g This is probably an allusion to *The Assumption of Moses*—an apocryphal

book which records a Jewish tradition that Moses was resurrected from death and taken to heaven. ^h Or *They are stains*—the meaning of the Greek is uncertain. ⁱ Among the early Christians, the Lord's Supper was commonly celebrated along with a meal. This meal was called an agape feast (love feast). Some Christians still have agape feasts today. ^j 1 Enoch 1:9—1 Enoch is part of the Apocrypha. ^k In verses 22-23, the manuscripts vary widely in their readings.

STUDY GUIDE

- (1) Who were the false teachers that Jude mentions? Do you think they were Gnostics? (*Jude 3-4, 8-19*)
- (2) Can you think of any false teachers that are troubling the church today?
- (3) Who were the angels “who did not keep their positions of authority?” Were they the angels who followed Satan in his rebellion against God, or were they the “sons of God” who sinned before the flood by marrying the “daughters of humanity,” as stated in 1 Enoch? (*Gen. 6:1-2; Jude 6-7*)
- (4) Why did Jude quote from 1 Enoch and probably allude to 1 Enoch and The Assumption of Moses? Do you think he regarded these apocryphal books as inspired? Could he have regarded them as fabrications, but still found some truth in them? (*Jude 6, 9, 14-15*)
- (5) How can we build ourselves up in our faith and pray in our union with the Holy Spirit? (*Jude 20*)
- (6) How can we apply Jude's counsel in verses 22-23?
- (7) What is Jude's message for the church today?

Revelation

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

(1) This is a revelation of Jesus Christ.^a God gave it to Christ, so that He could show His servants what must soon take place, and through His angel, He sent it in symbolic form to His servant John.^b

(2) Now John is testifying to what he saw concerning the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.^c (3) How blessed^d is the person who reads the messages of this prophetic book, and how blessed are those who hear and obey what is written in it. For the appointed time is near!

Greetings from John

(4) From John.

To the seven churches in the province of Asia.^e May you have grace and peace from the One Who is, the One Who was, and the One Who is coming, and from the sevenfold Spirit^f before His throne, (5) and from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn from the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth.

Doxology

To the One Who loves us and freed^g us from our sins with His blood, (6) and made us into a kingdom and into priests to serve His God and Father—to Him be glory and power forever and ever!^h Amen.

(7) Look! He is coming with the clouds,
and every eye will see Him—
even those who pierced Him.
And all the peoples of the earth
will mourn because of Him.
Yes indeed! Amen!

(8) “I am the Alpha and the Omega,”ⁱ says the Lord God, “the One Who is, the One Who was, and the One Who is coming—the Almighty.”

John's Vision of Christ

(9) I am John, your brother and partner in the suffering and kingdom and endurance that are ours in our union with Jesus. I was on the island called Patmos^j because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. (10) And on the Lord's day,^k I was in the Spirit when I heard a loud voice behind me that sounded like a trumpet. (11) It was saying, “Write what you see on a scroll, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia,

and Laodicea.”^l

(12) Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands. (13) And among the lampstands was Someone like a Son of Man.^m He was wearing a robe that reached down to His feet, and He had a golden sash around His chest. (14) His head and His hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes were like fiery flames. (15) His feet were like a fine copper alloyⁿ glowing in a furnace, and His voice was like the roar of many waters.

(16) He had seven stars in His right hand, and a sharp, double-edged sword extended out of His mouth. His face was like the sun shining at full strength, (17) and when I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man.

Then He placed His right hand on me and said, “Don’t be afraid. I am the First and the Last (18) and the One Who is living! Yes, I was dead, but look—I am alive forever and ever! And I have the keys to death and the grave. (19) So write down what you saw, what is happening now, and what is going to happen later. (20) This is the secret meaning of the seven stars that you saw in My right hand and of the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars represent the messengers^o of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands represent the seven churches.”

^a The expression *a revelation of Jesus Christ* can be understood in two ways: as a revelation that came from Jesus Christ and as a revelation about Jesus Christ. The Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. ^b This was the apostle John, the author of the fourth Gospel and of three epistles. ^c The expression *the testimony of Jesus Christ* can be understood in two ways: as testimony that came from Jesus Christ and as testimony about Jesus Christ. See also verse 9. ^d Or *happy*—this applies to each use of *blessed* in verse 3. ^e *Asia* was a Roman province that was located in what is now western Turkey. ^f Or *the seven spirits* ^g Some manuscripts read *washed*. ^h Some manuscripts simply read *forever!* ⁱ Some manuscripts read *the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End*. ^j *Patmos* is a small island in the Aegean Sea that served as a Roman penal colony. ^k The fact that John used the expression *the Lord’s Day* without defining it has led expositors to speculate as to what day is intended. Various proposals include Sunday (the day of Christ’s resurrection), Saturday (the traditional Sabbath), Easter Sunday, the day of the Lord (the idea is that John was transported in vision down to the day of Christ’s return), or even an imperial day (a day that was dedicated to the Roman emperor). ^l Christian congregations had been established in each of these seven cities that were located in the Roman province of Asia. These cities may have been situated along a mail route that a messenger bearing a letter would have traveled. ^m An allusion to Dan. 7:13 ⁿ Although a metal is intended, the precise meaning of the Greek is uncertain. ^o Or *angels*

CHAPTER 2

Christ's Message to Ephesus^a

(1) “Write this to the messenger^b of the church in Ephesus: This is what the One Who holds the seven stars in His right hand and Who walks among the seven golden lampstands is saying:

(2) ‘I am aware of your deeds, as well as your hard work and endurance. I also know that you cannot tolerate evil people. You have tested those who claim to be apostles, but are not, and have found them to be liars. (3) You have shown endurance and have suffered because of My name, and have not grown weary.

(4) Nevertheless, I have this complaint against you: You have abandoned your first love. (5) So remember where you have fallen from; repent, and do as you did at first. For if you don’t repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

(6) However, you have this to your credit: You hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans,^c which I also hate.

(7) Whoever has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches. To the one who overcomes, I will give permission to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God.”

Christ's Message to Smyrna^d

(8) “Write this to the messenger of the church in Smyrna: This is what the First and the Last, Who died and came to life again, is saying:

(9) ‘I am aware of your hardship and your poverty—although you are rich! I also know how you are slandered by those who claim to be Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. (10) Don’t be afraid of what you are about to suffer. Look, the devil is going to throw some of you into prison to test you, and you will experience persecution for ten days. Be faithful to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.

(11) Whoever has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches. The one who overcomes will never be harmed by the second death.”

Christ's Message to Pergamum^e

(12) “Write this to the messenger of the church in Pergamum: This is what the One with the sharp, double-edged sword is saying:

(13) ‘I am aware that you are living where Satan’s throne is located. And yet you keep clinging to My name. You did not renounce your faith in Me, even in the days of Antipas,^f My faithful witness, who was killed in your city, where Satan lives.

(14) Nevertheless, I have a few complaints against you, because you have people there who are following the teaching of Balaam. He instructed Balak to put a stumbling block before the Israelis by persuading them to eat food that had been sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality.^g (15) And you also have people there who are following the teaching of the Nicolaitans. (16) So repent! For if you don’t repent, I will come to you quickly and fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

(17) Whoever has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches. To the one who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white pebble with a new name written on it that can only be understood by the one who receives it.’”

Christ’s Message to Thyatira^h

(18) “Write this to the messenger of the church in Thyatira: This is what the Son of God, Whose eyes are like fiery flames and Whose feet are like a fine copper alloy,ⁱ is saying:

(19) ‘I am aware of your deeds—your love, faith, service, and endurance. And your later deeds are better than your earlier ones!

(20) Nevertheless, I have this complaint against you: You are tolerating that woman Jezebel,^j who calls herself a prophetess. She is leading My servants astray by teaching them to commit sexual immorality and to eat food that has been sacrificed to idols. (21) I have given her time to repent, but she is unwilling to repent of her sexual immorality. (22) So look, I am going to throw her into a bed of suffering, and I will plunge those who are committing adultery with her into terrible suffering, unless they repent of her lifestyle. (23) And I will kill her children with a deadly plague! Then all the churches will know that I am the One Who is continually searching hearts and minds. And I will give each of you what your deeds deserve.

(24) Now I am telling the rest of you in Thyatira—those of you who are not following this doctrine and who have not learned the so-called “deep secrets of Satan”—that I will not lay any other burden on you. (25) Just cling to what you have until I come. (26) To the one who overcomes and performs My deeds until the end, I will give authority over the nations—

(27) “He will rule them with a rod of iron and dash them to pieces like clay pots.’”^k

(28)—just as I have received authority from My Father. And I will give him the

morning star. (29) Whoever has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.”

^a *Ephesus* was a famous port city on the west coast of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) and the capital of the Roman province of Asia. ^b Or *angel*—see also verses 8, 12, and 18. ^c The *Nicolaitans* seem to have been a Gnostic sect which taught that sexual immorality, being a deed of the flesh, has no effect on the spirit or on a person’s relationship with God. According to an early Christian tradition that may or may not be true, the founder of this sect was the deacon, Nicolaus, who is mentioned in Acts 6:5. ^d *Smyrna* is the only one of the seven cities that is still inhabited. Its modern name is *Izmir*, and it is located on the eastern shore of the Aegean Sea, about 35 miles north of the site of Ephesus. ^e *Pergamum* was built on a high hill that overlooks the valley of the Caicus River. Its site is about 40 miles north of Izmir (Smyrna) and about ten miles inland from the Aegean Sea. ^f Expositors are divided on whether *Antipas* was an individual Christian who was put to death in Pergamum for his faith or whether this figure is symbolic of Christian martyrs in general. ^g For the story of Balaam, see Num. 22-25; 31:1-12. ^h *Thyatira* was the least important of the seven cities. It was located in the Lycus River valley, about 25 miles southeast of Pergamum. ⁱ Although a metal is intended, the precise meaning of the Greek is uncertain. ^j For the story of King Ahab and his infamous wife, Jezebel, see 1 Kings 16:29-22:40; 2 Kings 9:30-37. ^k Ps. 2:9

CHAPTER 3

Christ’s Message to Sardis^a

(1) “Write this to the messenger^b of the church in Sardis: This is what the One with the sevenfold Spirit^c of God and the seven stars is saying:

‘I am aware of your deeds. You have a reputation for being alive, but you are dead. (2) So wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die. For I have found that your deeds are incomplete in the sight of My God. (3) Remember what you have received and heard. Keep clinging to it and repent. For if you don’t wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will never know when I will come against you.

(4) Nevertheless, there are a few people in Sardis who have not stained their clothes, and they will walk with Me in white because they are worthy.

(5) The one who overcomes like this will wear white clothes, and I will never erase his name from the book of life. But I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. (6) Whoever has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.”

Christ's Message to Philadelphia^d

(7) "Write this to the messenger of the church in Philadelphia: This is what the One Who is holy, the One Who is genuine, the One with the key of David, the One Who opens doors that no one can shut and shuts doors that no one can open is saying:

(8) 'I am aware of your deeds. See, I have placed an open door in front of you that no one can shut. I also know that you have only a little strength, but you have obeyed My word and have not denied My name. (9) I will make those who belong to the synagogue of Satan—who claim to be Jews and are not, but are lying—I will make them come and worship at your feet. Then they will realize that I have loved you.

(10) Now since you have obeyed My commandment to endure, I will protect you from the time of testing that is about to come on the entire world,^e to test those who live on the earth. (11) I am coming soon! Keep clinging to what you have, so that no one can take your crown.

(12) I will make the one who overcomes a pillar in the sanctuary of My God, and he will never leave it. I will write the name of My God on him, along with the name of the city of My God—the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from My God—and I will also write My new name on him. (13) Whoever has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.'"

Christ's Message to Laodicea^f

(14) "Write this to the messenger of the church in Laodicea: This is what the Amen, the faithful and genuine Witness, and the Source^g of God's creation is saying:

(15) 'I am aware of your deeds—that you are neither cold nor hot. How I wish you were cold or hot! (16) But since you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am about to vomit you out of My mouth. (17) You keep saying, "I am rich! I have become wealthy! I don't need anything!" But you don't realize that you are wretched, pathetic, poor, blind, and naked. (18) I advise you to buy gold from Me that has been refined in fire, so you can become rich, and white clothes to wear, so your shameful nakedness can be covered, and ointment for your eyes, so you can see.

(19) I rebuke and discipline those I love. So be serious and repent! (20) Look, I am standing at the door and knocking. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and have supper with him, and he will have supper with Me.

(21) To the one who overcomes, I will give the privilege of sitting with Me on My throne, just as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. (22) Whoever has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.'"

^a *Sardis* was the capital of the ancient kingdom of Lydia, which fell to the Medes and Persians in 546 B.C. Although it was still an important city when John wrote Revelation, it was past its prime. Located some 50 miles east of Ephesus, it was built on the spur of a mountain. ^b Or *angel*—see also verses 7 and 14. ^c Or *the seven spirits* ^d *Philadelphia* was built on the south side of the Cogamis River and was situated on a Roman mail road about 30 miles east-southeast of Sardis. ^e The Greek term that has been translated *world* refers to the inhabited world. ^f *Laodicea* was located about 40 miles southeast of Philadelphia. It was a wealthy city that was famous for its black woolen cloth, lukewarm spring water, and eye ointment. ^g Or *Ruler*

CHAPTER 4

A Vision of God's Throne

(1) Now after these things, I saw a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice (the one that sounded like a trumpet when I heard it speaking to me) said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must happen after this.” (2) At once, I was in the Spirit, and I saw a throne in heaven with Someone sitting on it (3) Who looked like jasper and carnelian. A rainbow that looked like an emerald encircled the throne, (4) and around the throne were 24 other thrones with 24 elders sitting on them. These elders were dressed in white clothing and had golden crowns on their heads. (5) From the throne came flashes of lightning, noises, and peals of thunder. And in front of the throne, seven fiery lamps were burning, which represent the sevenfold Spirit^a of God. (6) There was also something like a sea of glass in front of the throne that looked like crystal.^b

At the center of the throne and around it were four living creatures that were covered with eyes in front and in back. (7) The first living creature was like a lion; the second was like a calf; the third had a human^c face, and the fourth was like a flying eagle. (8) Each of the four living creatures had six wings, and the creatures were covered with eyes inside and out. Day and night they never stop saying:

“Holy, holy, holy
is the Lord God Almighty,
the One Who was,
the One Who is,
and the One Who is coming.”

(9) Whenever the living creatures give praise, honor, and thanks to the One Who sits on the throne and Who lives forever and ever, (10) the 24 elders throw themselves down before the One Who sits on the throne and worship the One Who lives forever and ever. And they cast their crowns before the throne and say:

(11) You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive praise, honor, and power.
For You created all things,
and because of Your will,
they came into being
and were created.”

^a Or *the seven spirits* ^b Or *ice*. ^c The Greek term that has been translated *human* is gender inclusive.

CHAPTER 5

The Scroll and the Lamb

(1) Then I saw a scroll in the right hand of the One Who sat on the throne. It had writing on both of its sides, and it was tightly sealed with seven seals. (2) And I saw a mighty angel calling out in a loud voice, “Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?” (3) But no one in heaven, on earth, or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. (4) At this, I began to cry bitterly, because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside it.

(5) Then one of elders said to me, “Don’t cry. See! The Lion from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered. He can open the scroll and its seven seals.” (6) Then I saw a Lamb standing at the center of the throne, among the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb looked like He had been sacrificed, and He had seven horns and seven eyes, which represent the sevenfold^a Spirit^b of God sent out into all the earth. (7) And He came and took the scroll from the right hand of the One Who sat on the throne.

Worthy Is the Lamb

(8) When the Lamb had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the 24 elders fell down before Him. Each of them had a harp, and they were holding golden bowls that were full of incense, which represents the prayers of God’s holy people. (9) And they were singing a new song:

“You are worthy to take the scroll
and open its seals.
For You were sacrificed,
and with Your blood,
You made a purchase^c for God
from every tribe, language, people, and nation.

(10) You made them into a kingdom and into priests
to serve our God,
and they will reign on the earth.”

(11) Now as I looked, I heard the voices of many angels who encircled the throne along with the living creatures and the elders. Their number was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands. (12) With loud voices, they were saying:

“Worthy is the Lamb Who was sacrificed,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom
and strength and honor and glory and praise!”

(13) Then I heard every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth, and in the sea. All the creatures in those realms were saying:

“To the One Who sits on the throne
and to the Lamb be praise and honor
and glory and might forever and ever!”

(14) And the four living creatures kept saying, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

^aSome manuscripts omit *sevenfold*. ^bOr *the seven spirits* ^cSome manuscripts read *You purchased us*.

CHAPTER 6

The Lamb Opens the First Seal

(1) I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say in a thunderous voice, “Come!” (2) As I watched, a white horse appeared, and its rider had a bow. He was also given a crown, and he set out as a conqueror bent on conquest.

The Lamb Opens the Second Seal

(3) When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, “Come!” (4) And with that, another horse came out. It was fiery red, and its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth and to make people slaughter one another. And the rider was given a huge sword.

The Lamb Opens the Third Seal

(5) When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come!” Then a black horse appeared, and its rider had a scale in his hand. (6) And I heard what sounded like a voice from among the four living creatures. It was saying, “A quart of wheat for a denarius,^a and three quarts of barley for a denarius. But don’t harm the oil or the wine.”

The Lamb Opens the Fourth Seal

(7) When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, “Come!” (8) And as I watched, a sickly green horse appeared. Its rider was named Death, and the grave was following close behind. They were given power over a fourth of the earth—to kill people with the sword, famine, plague, and wild animals.

The Lamb Opens the Fifth Seal

(9) When the Lamb opened the fifth seal, beneath the altar, I saw those who had been slaughtered because of the word of God and the testimony they had given. (10) They cried out in a loud voice, “Sovereign Master, holy and genuine, how long will it be until You judge those who live on the earth and avenge our blood?” (11) Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were going to be killed as they had been was complete.

The Lamb Opens the Sixth Seal

(12) I watched as the Lamb opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like hairy sackcloth; the full moon turned blood red, (13) and the stars in the sky fell to the earth like green figs that drop from a fig tree when it is shaken by a strong wind. (14) The sky was split apart like a torn scroll that rolls itself up, and all the mountains and islands were moved from their places.

(15) Then the kings of the earth, the high officials, the military commanders, the rich, the powerful, and all the slaves and free people hid themselves in caves and among the boulders in the mountains. (16) And they called out to the mountains and the boulders, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of the One Who sits on the throne and from the holy anger of the Lamb! (17) For the great day of Their anger has come, and who can stand?”^b

^aThe denarius was a silver coin that was minted by the Romans. In the first century, it was the usual daily wage for the average worker. The prices for grain that are given in verse 6 are extremely inflated, indicating famine. ^b The information in Rev. 7 may be intended as an answer to this question.

CHAPTER 7

Interlude: One Hundred Forty-Four Thousand Sealed

(1) Now after this, I saw four angels who were standing at the four corners of the earth. They were holding back the four winds of the earth to keep them from blowing on the land, the sea, or any tree. (2) Then I saw another angel coming up from the east with the seal of the living God. And he cried out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given permission to harm the land and the sea: (3) “Don’t harm the land, the sea, or the trees until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.”

(4) Then I heard the number of those who were sealed; it was one hundred forty-four thousand. The people who were sealed came from all the tribes of Israel:^a

(5) From the tribe of Judah,
twelve thousand were sealed.

From the tribe of Reuben,
twelve thousand.

From the tribe of Gad,
twelve thousand.

(6) From the tribe of Asher,
twelve thousand.

From the tribe of Naphtali,
twelve thousand.

From the tribe of Manasseh,
twelve thousand.

(7) From the tribe of Simeon,
twelve thousand.

From the tribe of Levi,
twelve thousand.

From the tribe of Issachar,
twelve thousand.

(8) From the tribe of Zebulun,
twelve thousand.

From the tribe of Joseph,
twelve thousand.

From the tribe of Benjamin,
twelve thousand.

(9) Now after these things, I saw an enormous crowd that no one could count from every nation, tribe, people, and language. They were standing before the throne and the Lamb and were wearing white robes, with palm branches in their hands. (10) And they cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation is found in our God,
Who sits on the throne,
and in the Lamb.”

(11) All the angels were standing in a circle around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures. And they fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, (12) saying:

“Amen!
Blessing, glory, wisdom,
thanks, honor, power, and strength
belong to our God forever and ever!
Amen!”

(13) Then one of the elders asked me, “Who are these people who are wearing white robes, and where did they come from?” (14) I replied, “Sir, you know.” So the elder told me:

“These are the people
who have come out of the great tribulation.
They have washed their robes
and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.
(15) This is why they are standing before God’s throne
and serving Him day and night in His sanctuary.
And the One Who is sitting on the throne
will spread His tent over them.
(16) Never again will they be hungry.
Never again will they be thirsty.
The sun will not beat down on them,
nor any scorching heat.
(17) For the Lamb at the center of the throne
will be their Shepherd.
He will guide them to springs of living water,
and God will wipe away every tear
from their eyes.”

^aThe list of tribes in verses 5-8 presents several irregularities. A tribe of Joseph is not recognized in the Old Testament, because two tribes descended from Joseph: Ephraim and Manasseh. However, the tribe of Manasseh is listed in verse 6 along with the tribe of Joseph in verse 8, and the tribes of Ephraim and Dan are omitted completely. Some expositors suggest that these irregularities are an indication that this tribal list is to be understood symbolically.

CHAPTER 8

The Lamb Opens the Seventh Seal

(1) When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

Seven Trumpets and a Censer

(2) Then I saw the seven angels who stand in the presence of God, and seven trumpets were given to them. (3) And another angel with a golden censer came and stood at the altar. This angel was given a large amount of incense to offer with the prayers of all of God's holy people on the golden altar before the throne. (4) And the smoke from the incense went up from the angel's hand before God, along with the prayers of His people.

(5) Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it on the earth. And there were peals of thunder, noises, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake. (6) Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them.

The First Angel Blows His Trumpet

(7) When the first angel blew his trumpet, hail and fire were mixed with blood and thrown on the land. A third of the land was burned up. A third of the trees were burned up. And all the green grass was burned up.

The Second Angel Blows His Trumpet

(8) When the second angel blew his trumpet, something like a huge mountain that was burning with fire was thrown into the sea.^a A third of the sea turned to blood. (9) A third of the creatures that were living in the sea died. And a third of the ships were destroyed.

The Third Angel Blows His Trumpet

(10) When the third angel blew his trumpet, a huge star that was burning like a torch fell from the sky. It fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. (11) Now the name of the star was Wormwood.^b And a third of the water turned as bitter as wormwood, and many people^c died from drinking this water that had become bitter.

The Fourth Angel Blows His Trumpet

(12) When the fourth angel blew his trumpet, a third of the sun, a third of the

moon, and a third of the stars were struck. And as a result, a third of them turned dark, and a third of their light failed to shine by day and by night.

(13) Now as I watched, I heard a lone vulture.^d He was flying directly overhead and calling out in a loud voice: “Woe! Woe! Woe to those who live on the earth, because of the trumpet blasts that the other three angels are about to blow.”

^aAn allusion to Jer. 51:24-25 ^b*Wormwood* is a plant that is known for its bitter taste. ^cThe Greek term that has been translated *people* is gender inclusive. ^dOr *eagle*—some manuscripts read *angel*.

CHAPTER 9

The Fifth Angel Blows His Trumpet

(1) When the fifth angel blew his trumpet, I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. This star was given the key to the shaft of the abyss. (2) And when the star opened the shaft, smoke rose from it like smoke from a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke.

(3) Then locusts emerged from the smoke onto the earth, and they were given the kind of power that earthly scorpions have. (4) They were told not to harm the earth’s grass or any green plant or tree, but only the people^a who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. (5) The locusts were allowed to torment them for five months, but they were not allowed to kill them. And the agony that the locusts inflicted was like the agony that a scorpion inflicts when it stings someone. (6) During that time, those people will search for death, but they will never find it. They will long to die, but death will keep eluding them.

(7) Now the locusts resembled horses prepared for battle. On their heads were what looked like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces. (8) They had hair like women’s hair and teeth like lions’ teeth. (9) They had scales^b like iron breastplates, and the sound of their wings was like the roar of many horses and chariots rushing into battle. (10) They had tails and stingers like scorpions have, and for five months, they had the ability to injure people with their tails. (11) They also had the angel from the abyss ruling over them as their king. In Hebrew, his name is Abaddon^c and in Greek, Apollyon.^d

(12) The first woe was past. But two more woes were still to come.

The Sixth Angel Blows His Trumpet

(13) When the sixth angel blew his trumpet, I heard a lone voice coming from the horns^c on the golden altar that is before God. (14) It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels that have been held at the great river Euphrates.”

(15) So the four angels that had been kept ready for that very hour, day, month, and year were released to kill a third of humanity. (16) The number of the troops on horseback was two hundred million. I heard their number.

(17) This is what the horses and riders in my vision looked like: The breastplates that the riders wore were fiery red, sapphire blue, and yellow like sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and fire, smoke, and sulfur kept coming out of their mouths. (18) A third of humanity was killed by these three plagues of fire, smoke, and sulfur that kept coming out of the horses’ mouths. (19) For the power that the horses wielded resided in their mouths and in their tails. Their tails were like snakes with heads, and they kept using them to inflict injuries.

(20) But the rest of the people who survived these plagues still did not repent by turning away from the works of their hands. They continued to worship demons and idols made of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood—idols that could not see, hear, or walk. (21) Furthermore, they did not repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality, or their stealing.

^aThe Greek term that has been translated *people, someone, human, or humanity* in verses 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 15, 18, and 20 is gender inclusive. ^b Or *breastplates* ^c Hebrew for *destruction* ^d Greek for *Destroyer* ^e Some manuscripts read *the four horns*. These horns were projections on the altar.

CHAPTER 10

Interlude: The Angel with the Little Scroll

(1) Then I saw another powerful angel coming down from heaven. He was wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like like fiery pillars. (2) In his hand, he held a little scroll that was open. And he planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land (3) and cried out in a loud voice that sounded like a lion roaring. And when he cried out, the voices of the seven thunders spoke.

(4) Now I was about to write down what the seven thunders had said.^a But I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down.” (5) Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and the land raised his right hand to heaven. (6) And he swore an oath by the One Who lives forever and ever—the One Who created heaven and earth and the sea and everything in them^b—that there would be no more delay.^c (7) But in the days when the seventh angel is about to blow his trumpet, God’s mystery^d will be completed, in keeping with the good news that He proclaimed to His servants the prophets.

(8) Then the voice I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, “Go and take the open scroll from the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and the land.” (9) So I approached the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. “Take it and eat it,” he told me. “It will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth, it will taste as sweet as honey.”

(10) So I took the little scroll from the angel’s hand and ate it. And it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned bitter. (11) Then the voices^e told me, “You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages, and kings.”

^a Some manuscripts read *Now when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write.* ^b An allusion to Ex. 20:11 ^c Or *that there would be no more time.* ^d The Greek term that has been translated *mystery* refers to a special truth which God has revealed to Christians. ^e Literally, *Then they*

CHAPTER 11

Interlude: The Two Witnesses

(1) Now I was given a reed that looked like a measuring stick. Then I was told, “Get up and measure God’s sanctuary (including the altar), and count those who are worshiping in it. (2) But don’t measure the courtyard outside the sanctuary. Leave that out, because it has been given to the Gentiles, who will trample on the holy city for 42 months. (3) And I will give My two witnesses authority to prophesy for one thousand two hundred sixty days, while dressed in sackcloth.”

(4) These witnesses are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that are standing before the Lord of the earth. (5) If anyone wants to harm them, fire comes out of their mouths and consumes their enemies. As a matter of fact, anyone who wants to harm them is destined to be killed in this way. (6) These witnesses have the power to shut up the sky—to keep rain from falling during the time they are prophesying. They also have the power to turn water into blood and

to strike the earth with any kind of plague as often as they wish.

(7) Now when they have completed their testimony, the beast that is coming up from the abyss will do battle with them, conquer them, and kill them. (8) Their corpses will lie on the public square^a in the great city that is called Sodom and Egypt because of its spiritual condition—where even their Lord was crucified. (9) For three and a half days, men and women from every people, tribe, language, and nation will look at their corpses and refuse them burial. (10) The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and celebrate by exchanging gifts. For these two prophets were a torment to them.

(11) But after the three and a half days, a breath of life from God entered their bodies, and they stood on their feet, to the terror of those who were watching them. (12) Then the witnesses heard^b a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here!” And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on. (13) At that very hour, there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell down. Seven thousand people^c were killed by the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and praised the God of heaven.

(14) The second woe was past. But the third woe was hard on its heels.

The Seventh Angel Blows His Trumpet

(15) When the seventh angel blew his trumpet, there were loud voices in heaven that said:

“The kingdom of the world
has become the kingdom of the Lord
and of His Christ.^d
And He will reign forever and ever.”

(16) Then the 24 elders who were sitting on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God. (17) And they said:

^a“We thank You, Lord God Almighty—
the One Who is and Who was—
because You have taken Your great power,
and You began to reign.
(18) Yes, the nations were angry,
but Your holy anger arrived.
And the time came for the dead to be judged.
It was time to reward Your servants the prophets,
Your holy people,
and those who reverence Your name,
both small and great,
and to destroy those who were destroying the earth.”

(19) Then God’s sanctuary in heaven was opened, and the ark of His covenant became visible inside His sanctuary. And there were flashes of lightning, noises, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and a great hailstorm.

^aOr *street* ^bSome manuscripts read *Then I heard*. ^cThe Greek term that has been translated *people* is gender inclusive. ^dThe Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*.

CHAPTER 12

The Woman and the Dragon

(1) Now a great sign appeared in heaven—a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. (2) She was pregnant and was crying out because of her labor pains and the agony of giving birth.

(3) Then another sign appeared in heaven—a great, fiery red dragon with seven heads, ten horns, and seven crowns on his heads. (4) His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and hurled them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so he could devour her Child as soon as It was born. (5) She gave birth to a Son—a male Child, Who is destined to rule all the nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was snatched up to God and to His throne. (6) Then the woman fled into the desert, where God had prepared a place for her, so that she could be taken care of for one thousand two hundred sixty days.

Michael^a and the Dragon

(7) Now there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. (8) But the dragon was not strong enough, and there was no longer room for him and his angels in heaven. (9) So the great dragon was thrown out—that ancient snake, called the devil or Satan, who keeps deceiving the entire world.^b He was thrown out onto the earth, and his angels were thrown out with him.

(10) Then I heard a loud voice in heaven that said:

“Now the salvation,
the power,
the kingdom of our God,
and the authority of His Christ^c
have arrived.

For the accuser of our brothers,
who kept accusing them
before our God day and night,
has been thrown out.
(11) They overcame him
by the blood of the Lamb
and by the message
to which they testified.^d
And although they loved their lives,
they did not shrink from death.
(12) So rejoice, you heavens,
and you who live in them!
But woe to the land and the sea!
For the devil has come down to you
in a terrible rage,
because he knows that his time is short.”

The Dragon Persecutes the Woman

(13) Now when the dragon saw that he had been thrown out onto the earth, he persecuted^c the woman who had given birth to the male Child. (14) But the woman was given two wings like those of a great eagle, so that she could fly away from the presence of the snake to her place in the desert, where she was to be taken care of for a time, times, and half a time.

(15) Then the snake spewed a torrent of water out of his mouth, to overtake the woman and sweep her away in the flood. (16) But the land helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the torrent that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. (17) At this, the dragon was angry with the woman and went off to do battle with the rest of her descendants,^f who obey God’s commandments and have the testimony of Jesus.^g

^a *Michael the archangel* is also mentioned in Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1, and Jude 9. Expositors have expressed different opinions regarding the identity of Michael. Most expositors have identified Michael as God’s foremost angel or at least as one of His leading angels. In fact, ancient Jewish interpreters often portrayed Michael as one of seven archangels. However, there is also a minority opinion that equates Michael with Jesus Christ. Although this opinion has sometimes played a role in efforts to undermine belief in the Deity of Christ, it can also be held as an orthodox position, provided that Christ’s true Deity is not compromised and that the term “archangel” is taken to mean “first” or “primary Messenger.” ^b The Greek term that has been translated *world* refers to the inhabited world. ^c The Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. ^d Or *the message they uttered*. ^e Or *pursued* ^f Literally, *seed*, ^g Some manuscripts read *Jesus Christ*. The expression *the testimony of Jesus* can be understood in two ways: as testimony that came from Jesus and as testimony about Jesus.

CHAPTER 13

The Beast from the Sea

(1) Then the dragon^a stood on the sand of the seashore. And I saw a beast rising from the sea that had ten horns, seven heads, and ten crowns on his horns. And on each of his heads was a blasphemous name.^b (2) The beast that I saw looked like a leopard, but his feet were like a bear's feet, and his mouth was like a lion's mouth. And the dragon gave the beast his power, his throne, and great authority.

(3) Now one of the beast's heads looked like it had been sacrificed and put to death, but the deadly wound was healed. And in amazement, all the people on the earth followed the beast. (4) They worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who can do battle with him?"

(5) The beast was allowed to speak arrogant words and blasphemies, and to wield his authority for 42 months. (6) So he opened his mouth to blaspheme God—to slander His name, His tabernacle, and those who live in heaven. (7) He was allowed to do battle with God's holy people and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation. (8) All the people who live on the earth will worship him—all whose names are not written in the book of life that belongs to the Lamb Who was sacrificed from the creation of the world.^c (9) If anyone has an ear, let him hear.

(10) If anyone is destined for captivity,
into captivity he will go.
If anyone kills with the sword,
with the sword he must be killed.

This calls for endurance and faith on the part of God's holy people.

The Beast from the Land

(11) Then I saw another beast rising from the land. He had two horns like a lamb, but he was speaking like a dragon. (12) And he wielded all the authority of the first beast on his behalf^d and forced the earth and its inhabitants to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

(13) He also performed great and miraculous signs. He even made fire come down from heaven to earth in the sight of its people.^e (14) And by the miraculous signs that he was allowed to perform on behalf of the first beast,^f he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He told them to make an image in honor of the first beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived. (15) And he was allowed to give breath to the image of the first beast, so the image could both speak and put

to death whoever would not worship it. (16) He also forced everyone—small and great, rich and poor, free and slave—to receive a mark on his right hand or forehead. (17) So no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark of the beast—that is, his name or number.

(18) Now this calls for wisdom. Let the person who has understanding interpret^g the number of the beast. For it is humanity’s number,^h and his number is 666.ⁱ

^a Some manuscripts read *Then I*. ^b Some manuscripts read *were blasphemous names*.

^c Or *all whose names were not written from the creation of the world in the book of life that belongs to the Lamb Who was sacrificed*. ^d Or *in his presence*

^e The Greek term that has been translated *people/humanity’s* in verses 13 and 18 is gender inclusive. ^f Or *in the presence of the first beast*, ^g Or *calculate*

^h Or *For it is the number of a human being*, ⁱ Some manuscripts read *616*.

CHAPTER 14

The Lamb and His People

(1) Then I looked, and there was the Lamb standing on Mount Zion. And with Him were one hundred forty-four thousand people who had His name and His Father’s name written on their foreheads. (2) Then I heard a voice from heaven that sounded like the roar of many waters, like loud thunder, and like harpists playing their harps. (3) They were singing a new song before the throne, the four living creatures, and the elders. And no one could learn the song except the one hundred forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth. (4) These are the people who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the people who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These people were purchased as the firstfruits of humanity^a for God and for the Lamb. (5) No lie was found on their lips. They are blameless.

The Messages of the Three Angels

(6) Then I saw another^b angel flying directly overhead, and he had eternal good news to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language, and people. (7) And he said in a loud voice, “Fear God and give Him praise, because the time for His judgment arrived. Worship the One Who made the heavens, the earth, the sea,^c and the springs of water.”

(8) Now a second angel followed him and said, “Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the great! For she has made all the nations drink the wine which contains the fury that her sexual immorality provokes.”^d

(9) Then a third angel followed them and said in a loud voice, “If anyone worships

the beast and his image and receives his mark on his forehead or hand, (10) he will drink the wine of God's fury that has been poured undiluted into the cup of His holy anger. He will be tormented by fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb. (11) And the smoke from their torment will rise forever and ever.^c There will be no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image or for anyone who receives the mark of his name."

(12) Here is a call for endurance on the part of God's holy people who obey His commandments and have faith in Jesus. (13) And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this down: How blessed^f are the dead who die in union with the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit,^g "Let them rest from their toil. For their deeds are following them."

The Harvest of the Earth

(14) Now as I looked, a white cloud appeared. And Someone like a Son of Man^h was sitting on the cloud with a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand.

(15) Then another angel came out of the sanctuary and cried in a loud voice to the One Who was sitting on the cloud, "Swing Your sickle and begin to reap. For the time to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe." (16) So the One Who was sitting on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.

(17) Then another angel came out of the heavenly sanctuary, and he also had a sharp sickle. (18) And still another angel, who was in charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to the angel who had the sharp sickle, "Swing your sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine, because its clusters are ripe." (19) At this, the angel swung his sickle toward the earth and gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God's fury. (20) And when the winepress was trampled outside the city, blood as high as a horse's bridle poured out of the press for 200 miles.ⁱ

^a The Greek term that has been translated *humanity* is gender inclusive. ^b Some manuscripts omit *another*. ^c An allusion to Ex. 20:11 ^d Or *the passionate wine of her sexual immorality*. ^e An allusion to Isa. 34:10 ^f Or *happy* ^g Some manuscripts read "*How blessed are the dead who die in union with the Lord from now on,*" says the Spirit. ^h An allusion to Dan. 7:13 ⁱ Literally, *one thousand six hundred stadia*.

CHAPTER 15

The Song of Moses and the Lamb

(1) Then I saw another great and wonderful sign in heaven—seven angels with the seven last plagues. These are the last plagues, because in them, God’s fury is complete.

(2) I also saw what looked like a sea of glass that was mixed with fire. And those who had overcome the beast, his image, and the number of his name were standing on this glassy sea. They had harps that God had given them, (3) and they were singing the song of God’s servant Moses and the song of the Lamb:

“Great and wonderful
are Your deeds,
Lord God Almighty.
Righteous and genuine
are Your ways,
King of the nations.^a
(4) Who will not stand
in awe of You, Lord,
and praise Your name?
For You alone are holy!
All the nations will come
and worship before You.
For Your righteous verdicts
have been revealed.”

Access to the Sanctuary Denied

(5) Now after these things, I looked, and the sanctuary—the heavenly tabernacle of testimony—was opened. (6) And the seven angels with the seven plagues came out of the sanctuary. They were dressed in clean, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests.

(7) Then one of the four living creatures gave the seven angels seven golden bowls that were full of the fury of God, Who lives forever and ever. (8) At this, the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory and power of God. And no one could enter the sanctuary^b until the seven plagues that the seven angels poured out came to an end.

^a Some manuscripts read *ages*. ^b An allusion to Heb. 10:19-20

CHAPTER 16

The Seven Last Plagues

(1) Then I heard a loud voice from the sanctuary saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour the seven bowls of God’s fury on the earth.”

The First Plague

(2) So the first angel went away and poured his bowl on the land, and vile, terrible sores appeared on the people^a who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.

The Second Plague

(3) The second angel poured his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse, and every living creature in the sea died.

The Third Plague

(4) The third angel poured his bowl into the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. (5) Then I heard the angel in charge of the water say:

“You are righteous, O Holy One,
Who is and Who was,
because You have sent these judgments.

(6) For they have poured out the blood
of holy people and prophets,
and You have given them blood to drink,
as they deserve.”

(7) And I heard a voice from the altar respond:

“Yes, Lord God Almighty,
Your judgments are genuine and righteous.”

The Fourth Plague

(8) The fourth angel poured his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch the people with fire. (9) So they were scorched by the fierce heat, and they blasphemed the name of God, Who had power over these plagues. But they refused to repent or give Him praise.

The Fifth Plague

(10) The fifth angel poured his bowl on the throne of the beast, and the beast's kingdom was plunged into darkness. At this, its citizens bit their tongues in agony, (11) and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their agony and sores. But they still refused to repent of their deeds.

The Sixth Plague

(12) The sixth angel poured his bowl into the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the east. (13) Then I saw three unclean spirits that looked like frogs come out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. (14) These are demonic spirits that perform miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world^b—to assemble them for battle on the great day of God Almighty. (15) (See, I am coming like a thief! How blessed^c is the person who stays awake and keeps his clothes on. He won't have to walk around naked and be put to shame in the sight of others.) (16) And the demons assembled the kings at the place that is called Armageddon in Hebrew.

The Seventh Plague

(17) The seventh angel poured his bowl into the air, and a loud voice from the throne came out of the sanctuary, saying, "It is finished."^d (18) There were flashes of lightning, noises, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake. This earthquake was so extensive and so great! Such a quake has not occurred since humanity has been on the earth. (19) The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. So God remembered to give Babylon the Great the cup of wine that was filled with His furious holy anger. (20) Every island disappeared, and the mountains could not be found. (21) Huge hailstones, each weighing about 100 pounds,^e descended on the people from the sky, and they blasphemed God because the plague of hail was so severe.

^a The Greek term that has been translated *people/humanity* in verses 2, 8, 18, and 21 is gender inclusive. ^b The Greek term that has been translated *world* refers to the inhabited world. ^c Or *happy* ^d A probable allusion to John 19:30
^e Literally, *each weighing a talent*.

CHAPTER 17

The Prostitute and the Beast

(1) Now one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls approached me and said, “Come, I will show you the condemnation of the great prostitute, who is sitting on many waters. (2) The kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality with her, and the people who live on the earth have become drunk from the wine of her sexual immorality.”

(3) Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert, where I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and that had seven heads and ten horns. (4) The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet clothing, and was covered with gold, precious stones, and pearls. In her hand, she was holding a golden cup that was filled with abominable things and the filth of her sexual immorality. (5) And there was a title written on her forehead that was a mystery:^a

BABYLON THE GREAT,
THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES,
AND OF THE EARTH’S ABOMINATIONS.

(6) I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of God’s holy people and with the blood of those who were witnesses for Jesus, and I was greatly amazed when I saw her. (7) But the angel said to me, “Why are you so amazed? I will explain the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her—the beast with the seven heads and the ten horns. (8) The beast you saw once existed and does not exist at the present time, but he is about to rise from the abyss and is headed for destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be amazed when they see the beast because he once existed, and although he does not exist at the present time, he will come again.

(9) Now this calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is sitting, and they are also seven kings. (10) Five of them have fallen; one exists at the present time, and the other one has not come yet. But when he does come, he is destined to remain for only a little while. (11) The beast that once existed and does not exist at the present time is an eighth king, but he belongs to the seven and is headed for destruction.

(12) The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not received their kingdoms yet. But they will receive authority to rule as kings for one hour, along with the beast. (13) These kings will have one intention, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. (14) They will do battle with the Lamb, but the Lamb will conquer them. For He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and His called,

chosen, and faithful followers will be with Him.”

(15) Then the angel continued, “The waters you saw (where the prostitute is sitting) are peoples, populations, nations, and languages. (16) And as for the ten horns and the beast you saw, these kings will come to hate the prostitute. They will cause her to be abandoned and naked, and they will eat her flesh and destroy her with fire. (17) For God has put a plan in their minds that will accomplish His intention. So they will give their royal authority to the beast until God’s words are fulfilled. (18) The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.”

^aSome expositors believe that the term *mystery* is part of the prostitute’s title. See also verse 7.

CHAPTER 18

The Fall of Babylon

(1) Now after these things, I saw another angel coming down from heaven with great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his glory. (2) Then he cried out in a loud voice:

“Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!
She has become a dwelling place for demons,
a stronghold for every evil spirit,
and a stronghold for every unclean and detestable bird.^a
(3) For all the nations have drunk the wine^b
which contains the fury
that her sexual immorality provokes.^c
The kings of the earth
have committed sexual immorality with her.
And the merchants of the earth have grown rich
from her extravagant luxury.”^d

(4) Then I heard another voice from heaven saying:

“Come out of her, My people.
You must not participate in her sins
and receive her plagues.
(5) For her sins have accumulated
until they reach heaven,
and God has remembered her crimes.

(6) Pay her back like she paid others.
Double the punishment for what she has done.
In the cup that she mixed for others,
mix her a drink that is twice as strong.
(7) Since she has glorified herself
and lived in luxury,^e
give her just as much torment and grief.
For in her heart, she keeps boasting,
'I am sitting here as a queen.
I am not a widow,
and I will never experience grief.'
(8) For this reason, she will experience her plagues
of death, grief, and famine on a single day,
and she will be consumed by fire.
For the Lord God Who is judging her
is powerful."

(9) When the kings of the earth who committed sexual immorality with her and who lived in luxury with her see the smoke from her burning, they will cry and mourn over her. (10) Frightened by her torment, they will keep their distance and exclaim:

"Woe! Woe to the great city!
O Babylon, city of strength,
in a single hour, your judgment has come!"

(11) The merchants of the earth will cry and mourn over her because no one buys their goods anymore—(12) goods of gold, silver, precious stones, pearls, fine linen, purple and scarlet cloth, silk, all kinds of scented wood, all kinds of ivory objects, all kinds of objects made of precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble, (13) cinnamon, spice from India, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, olive oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle, sheep, horses, wagons, and slaves—who are human beings.^f The merchants will say:

(14) "The ripe fruit you longed for has left you,
and all your dainties and splendor are lost to you.
No one will ever find them again."

(15) Frightened by her torment, the merchants who sold these goods and gained their wealth from her will keep their distance. They will cry and mourn (16) as they exclaim:

"Woe! Woe to the great city
that was dressed in fine linen,
purple, and scarlet clothing,
and was covered with gold,

precious stones,
and pearls!
(17) For in a single hour,
so much wealth
was laid waste!”

Now every ship’s owner, and every passenger, and sailors, and all who earn their living from the sea kept their distance. (18) And as they saw the smoke from her burning, they began crying out, “What could be compared with the great city?” (19) Then they threw dust on their heads, and with crying and mourning, they shouted aloud:

“Woe! Woe to the great city,
where all who had ships on the sea
became rich from her prosperity.
For in a single hour, she was laid waste!

(20) Rejoice over her, O heaven!
Rejoice, you holy people,
apostles and prophets,
because God has condemned her
for the unjust verdict
that you received from her.”

(21) Then a mighty angel picked up a rock that looked like a huge millstone and threw it into the sea, saying:

“With a sudden rush like this,
the great city Babylon
will be thrown down,
and it will never be found again.

(22) The melodies of harpists,
musicians,
flute-players,
and trumpeters
will never be heard in you again.
No skilled craftsman
will ever be found in you again.
The sound of a millstone^s
will never be heard in you again.

(23) The light from a lamp
will never shine in you again.
And the voices of grooms and brides
will never be heard in you again.
For your merchants

were the important people
on the earth,
because all the nations
were deceived by your sorcery.^h
(24) Yes, the blood of prophets
and holy people
was found in her,
and the blood of all those
who have been slaughtered
on the earth.”

^a Some manuscripts read *a stronghold for every evil spirit, a stronghold for every unclean bird, and a stronghold for every unclean and detestable animal.* ^b Some manuscripts read *have fallen from the wine.* ^c Or *the passionate wine of her sexual immorality.* ^d Or *from the power of her sensuality.* ^e Or *sensuality,* ^f The Greek term that has been translated *human beings* is gender inclusive. ^g Or *mill* ^h Or *witchcraft.*

CHAPTER 19

(1) Now after these things, I heard what sounded like loud noise from a great crowd in heaven. They were shouting:

“Hallelujah!
Salvation,
glory,
and power
belong to our God.
(2) For His judgments
are genuine and righteous.
He has condemned
the great prostitute,
who corrupted the earth
with her sexual immorality.
And He has avenged
the blood of His servants
that was shed by her hands.”

(3) Then the crowd shouted a second time:

“Hallelujah!

The smoke from her burning
continues to rise forever and ever.”^a

(4) At this, the 24 elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, Who was sitting on the throne. “Amen! Hallelujah!” they shouted. (5) And a voice that came from the throne said:

“Keep praising our God,
all who serve and fear Him,
both small and great!”

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

(6) Then I heard what sounded like noise from a great crowd, like the roar of many waters, and like loud thunder. They were shouting:

“Hallelujah!
For the Lord our God,
the Almighty,
is reigning.
(7) Let us rejoice,
be very glad,
and give Him praise!
For the marriage of the Lamb
has come,
and His bride
has prepared herself for it.
(8) She has been given fine linen,
bright and clean,
to wear.”

This fine linen represents the righteous verdicts that God’s holy people receive.

(9) Then the angel said to me, “Write this: ‘How blessed^b are those who have been invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’” And he added, “These are the genuine words of God.” (10) At this, I fell at the angel’s feet to worship him. But he exclaimed, “Watch out! Don’t do that! I am your fellow servant and a fellow servant of your brothers who have the testimony of Jesus.^c You must worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

The Rider on the White Horse

(11) Then I saw heaven standing open, and a white horse appeared, whose Rider was named Faithful and Genuine. (Yes, with justice He judges and goes to war!) (12) His eyes were like fiery flames; on His head were many crowns, and He had a name recorded that only He could understand. (13) He was dressed in a robe that had been dipped in blood,^d and His name was the Word of God. (14) The

armies of heaven, dressed in fine linen, clean and white, were following Him on white horses, (15) and a sharp sword extended out of His mouth to strike the nations. He will rule them with a rod of iron and tread the winepress of the furious holy anger of God Almighty. (16) On His robe and His thigh, He had this title inscribed:

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

(17) Now I saw a lone angel standing in the sun, and he cried out in a loud voice to all the birds that were flying overhead, “Come! Gather together for God’s great supper! (18) You can eat the flesh of kings, military commanders, and powerful men, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, both free and slave, small and great.”

(19) Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth, along with their armies. They had assembled to do battle with the Rider on the horse and His army. (20) But the beast was captured, along with the false prophet who had performed miraculous signs on his behalf.^c The false prophet had used these signs to delude those who had received the mark of the beast and had worshiped his image. So both of them were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. (21) And the rest of their armies were killed by the sword that extended out of the mouth of the Rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on the flesh of those who had been killed.

^aAn allusion to Isa. 34:10 ^bOr *happy* ^cThe expression *the testimony of Jesus* can be understood in two ways: as testimony that came from Jesus and as testimony about Jesus. ^dSome manuscripts read *sprinkled with blood.* ^eOr *in his presence.*

CHAPTER 20

The Thousand Years

(1) Now I saw an angel coming down from heaven with the key to the abyss and a great chain in his hand. (2) And he laid hold of the dragon, that ancient snake who is the devil and Satan, and chained him up for a thousand years. (3) The angel threw him into the abyss, locked it, and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations any more until the thousand years are over. But after that, he is destined to be released for a little while.

(4) Then I saw thrones, and those who sat on them were given authority to pronounce judgment. I also saw those who had been beheaded because of the

testimony of Jesus^a and the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or hands. And they came to life and reigned with Christ^b for a thousand years. (5) (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were over.) This is the first resurrection. (6) How blessed^c and holy are those who participate in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

Satan's Last Battle

(7) Now when the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison (8) and will go out to deceive Gog and Magog^d (the nations at the four corners of the earth), to assemble them for battle. In number, they are like the sand on the seashore. (9) And they advanced over the broad expanse of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's holy people—the city He loves. But fire came down from heaven^e and consumed them. (10) And the devil, who had deceived them, was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown,^f and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

The Dead Are Judged

(11) Then I saw a great white throne with Someone sitting on it; the earth and the sky fled from His presence, but no place was found for them. (12) And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which was the book of life. And the dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books.^g

(13) The sea gave up its dead, and death and the grave gave up their dead, and each person was judged according to what he had done. (14) Then death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire, which is the second death. (15) And if anyone's name was not found in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

^a The expression *the testimony of Jesus* can be understood in two ways: as testimony that came from Jesus and as testimony about Jesus. ^b The Greek term, *Christ*, and the Hebrew term, *Messiah*, both mean *Anointed One*. See also verse 6. ^c Or *happy*. ^d An allusion to Ezek. 38 and 39. ^e Some manuscripts read *from God out of heaven*. ^f Although the words *had been thrown* do not appear in the original text, they have been added for clarification. ^g Verses 11 and 12 are an allusion to Dan. 7:9-10.

CHAPTER 21

A New Heaven and a New Earth

(1) Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had disappeared, and there was no longer any sea. (2) I also saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven. It was prepared like a bride who was beautifully dressed for her husband. (3) And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s tabernacle is with human beings,^a and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them.^b (4) He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death, grief, crying, or pain. For the old order of things has disappeared.”

(5) The One Who was sitting on the throne said, “See! I am making everything new.” And He added, “Write this down. For these words are trustworthy and genuine.” (6) Then He said to me, “It is finished.^c I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty, I will give a free drink from the spring of life-giving water. (7) The person who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God, and he will be My son.^d (8) But those who are cowardly, unbelieving, and vile, murderers, those who are sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars will meet their fate in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur. This is the second death.”

The New Jerusalem

(9) Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues approached me and said, “Come here! I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” (10) And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven. (11) The city had the glory of God shining on it. It had the internal luster of a precious gem, like a jasper stone that sparkles like crystal, (12) and it had a great, high wall with twelve gates. Twelve angels were stationed at the gates, and the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were written on the gates. (13) There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south, and three on the west. (14) The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb appeared on them.

(15) Now the angel who was speaking with me had a golden measuring rod to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. (16) The city was laid out like a square; it was as wide as it was long. So he measured the city with the rod and found it to be about 1,400 miles.^e Its length, width, and height were equal. (17) He also measured its wall, and according to the human measurement that the angel was using, it was about 216 feet.^f

(18) The material used in the construction of its wall was jasper, and the city

was made of pure gold that resembled transparent glass. (19) The foundations of the city wall had been decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, (20) the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh goldstone, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth green hornstone, the eleventh blue zircon, and the twelfth amethyst.^g (21) The twelve gates were twelve pearls, and each gate was made of a single pearl. The city square^h was made of pure gold, as transparent as glass.

(22) I didn't see any sanctuary in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb were its sanctuary. (23) And the city didn't need the sun or the moon to shine on it, because the glory of God provided it with light, and the Lamb was its Lamp. (24) The nations will walk in its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. (25) Its gates will never be closed during the day, and there will be no night there. (26) The nations will bring their splendor and wealth into it, (27) but nothing impure and no one who practices lies or abominations will ever enter it. Only those who have their names written in the Lamb's book of life will be allowed to enter it.

^aThe Greek term that has been translated *human beings/human* in verses 3 and 17 is gender inclusive. ^b Some manuscripts add *and He will be their God*. ^c A probable allusion to John 19:30 ^d An allusion to 2 Sam. 7:14 ^e Literally, *twelve thousand stadia*—one stadion equals 607 feet. It is uncertain whether this is a measurement of the city's circumference or of one of its sides. ^f Literally, *144 cubits*—it is uncertain whether this is a measurement of the height of the wall or of its thickness. ^g The identity of some of these precious stones is uncertain. ^h Or *The street of the city*

CHAPTER 22

(1) Then the angel showed me a river of life-giving water. It was sparkling like crystal as it flowed from the throne of God and the Lamb (2) down the middle of the city square.^a On each side of the river stood a tree of life that kept producing twelve crops of fruit—one per month. And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

(3) There will no longer be anything that is cursed. But the throne of God and the Lamb will be in the city, and His servants will serve Him. (4) They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. (5) There will no longer be any night, nor will they need the light of lamp or sun. For the Lord God will shed light on them, and they will reign forever and ever.

(6) Then the angel said to me, “These words are trustworthy and genuine. The Lord, the God of the prophetic spirit, has sent His angel to show His servants what must soon take place.”

Jesus Is Coming Soon!

(7) “Look! I am coming soon! How blessed^b is the person who heeds the prophetic messages that are in this book!”

(8) I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who was showing them to me. (9) But he said to me, “Watch out! Don’t do that! I am your fellow servant and a fellow servant of your brothers the prophets and of those who heed the messages that are in this book. You must worship God!” (10) Then he added, “Do not seal the prophetic messages that are in this book. For the appointed time is near! (11) Let the evil person continue to practice evil, and let the vile person continue to be vile. But let the righteous person continue to practice righteousness, and let the holy person continue to be holy.”

(12) “Look! I am coming soon! My reward is with Me to pay each person for what he has done. (13) I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.”

(14) How blessed are those who keep washing their robes!^c They will have access to the tree of life and will enter the city through its gates. (15) Outside are dogs,^d sorcerers, and people who practice sexual immorality, murderers, idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices deceit.

(16) “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Descendant of David—the Bright Morning Star.”

(17) The Spirit and the bride keep saying, “Come!” Let the person who is hearing this say, “Come!” And let the person who is thirsty come! Let anyone who wants the life-giving water take it as a free gift.

(18) I am warning everyone who listens to the messages of this prophetic book: If anyone adds something to them, God will add the plagues to him that are described in this book. (19) And if anyone takes something away from the messages of this prophetic book, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city that are described in this book.

(20) The One Who is testifying to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon!” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! (21) May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with everyone.^e

^a Or *the street of the city*. ^b Or *happy*—see also verse 14. ^c Some manuscripts read *How blessed are those who keep obeying His commandments!* ^d In the New Testament, the term *dogs* is used in a figurative sense for evil people. ^e Some manuscripts read *be with all of God’s holy people. Amen.*

STUDY GUIDE

(1) Do a study of the four different systems of prophetic interpretation: preterism, historicism, futurism, and idealism. Which of these four systems does the best job of explaining how the book of Revelation should be understood? Could a combination of the four systems provide the best explanation of Revelation’s prophecies?

(2) How does the book of Revelation reveal Jesus Christ? (*Rev. 1:1*)

(3) How did Jesus free us from our sins with His blood? (*Rev. 1:5*)

(4) In *Rev. 1:10*, John tells us that he was in the Spirit on “the Lord’s day.” Expositors have suggested different meanings for term “Lord’s day”—Sunday, Saturday, Easter Sunday, the day of Christ’s second advent, an imperial holiday, etc. What do you think John meant by “the Lord’s day?”

(5) In *Rev. 2* and *3*, we find seven messages from Jesus to seven different churches that existed at the end of the first century. However, some expositors believe that these messages are also prophecies that apply to seven different eras in church history. Can you find any evidence that supports or contradicts such a conclusion?

(6) Who are the 24 elders and the four living creatures? Are they literal or symbolic? (*Rev. 4:4-11*)

- (7) Why is Jesus described as both a lion and a lamb? (*Rev. 5:5-6*)
- (8) Why do you think that Jesus is repeatedly depicted as a lamb in Revelation?
- (9) Do you notice any relationship between the first four seals and the end-time signs that Jesus gave? (*Matt. 24:3-14; Rev. 6:1-8*)
- (10) Do you think the one hundred forty-four thousand are literal or symbolic? Are they literal Jews or spiritual Israel? (*Rev. 7:4-9*)
- (11) What do you think the seven trumpets symbolize? (*Rev. 8:2-13; Rev. 9; Rev. 11:15-19*)
- (12) What does the relationship between a husband and a wife symbolize? Does this help us understand the symbolism of a “woman clothed with the sun”? (*Eph. 5:22-33; Rev. 12:1-6, 13-17*)
- (13) Rev. 12:11 is the central verse in the book of Revelation. Who is at the center of the book?
- (14) What do the two beasts in Rev. 13 represent?
- (15) What do the mark and the number of the beast represent? (*Rev. 13:16-18*)
- (16) What are the messages of the three angels all about? Do they have a relationship to the second advent? (*Rev. 14:6-20*)
- (17) What is the relationship between Rev. 15:8 and Heb. 10:19-20? Does Rev. 15:8 suggest that a time will come when Christ will no longer intercede for sinners?
- (18) Do you think the seven last plagues are literal or symbolic? (*Rev. 16*)
- (19) What is Babylon the Great? (*Rev. 17*)
- (20) Do a study of premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism. Then read Rev. 20:1-10. Which of these three systems of interpretation agrees with the message of these verses?
- (21) How literally should we take the accounts of the new earth and the holy city? Is there symbolism in these accounts? (*Rev. 21 and 22*)

