

INTRODUCTION to the Old Testament Stories

In this "Children's Bible History" book there are 68 stories from the Old Testament and 78 stories from the New Testament. This is the Intermediate Level written for grade 4-7, appropriate for Sunday School, Parochial School, Home Schooling, and Family Devotions.

The Old Testament stories set before us the eternal, holy, almighty, all wise and loving God who in His divine love created a visible universe in which the human race could stand in awe before His handiwork and worship and serve Him in eternal joy and peace forever. God created angels and man with free will, but a leading angel, now called Satan, rebelled and brought sin into the world. Man, also, chose to disobey God and thus mankind came under the judgment of God, everlasting damnation in hell, which had been passed upon Satan and the evil angels who followed him. All human beings were now sinful because they inherited the sinful nature of Adam and Eve.

In grace and love, God set before Adam and Eve and all mankind a Promise in Genesis 3:15. "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her **Seed (Jesus, the Messiah)** He will crush your head, and you will crush His heel." God promised to send a Savior to redeem man by bringing to Him the forgiveness of sin. Whoever recognizes his sinfulness and believes God's promise would be forgiven and come to heaven after death to live with God forever. So that all would recognize the coming Redeemer, know Him, and believe in Him, God gave His verbally inspired message of the coming of the Messiah, the Savior, in the Old Testament and its fulfillment in the New Testament.

In the Creation account, we note that God said, "Let **us** make man in **our** image." In these words we see the Triune God, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, yet we acknowledge God as One God and Lord of all. In the Old Testament, Jesus as the Second Person of the Trinity is clearly seen and made known in these eleven pictures.

The Angel of the Lord (the Malakh Jahweh) - Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity.

The Promised Seed - Jesus, the Messiah.

The Word - Jesus, the Messenger setting before mankind the way and will of God.

The Prophet - Jesus, the divine Teacher.

The High Priest - Jesus, who would atone for the sin of the world.

The Lamb - Jesus, who would be sacrificed in death on the cross.

The Suffering Servant - Jesus as portrayed in prophesy especially in the book of Isaiah.

The Incarnate Wisdom - Jesus setting before mankind the light of Salvation.

The Divine Shepherd - Jesus, who would gather His flock.

The Divine Rock - Jesus, who would protect and bring His people to their eternal home.

The Divine King - Jesus, who would conquer sin, death, and hell and reign forever.

In the Old Testament stories, you will again and again see the appearance of **The Angel of the Lord** as God's Divine Messenger and Spokesman, carrying out God's judgments.

Please note that this is not just one of God's created angels, but Christ Himself, the Second Person of the Trinity, who speaks for God the Father and carries out His Will setting up the time of His coming as Jesus Christ, the Messiah, in the New Testament.

- Note: The bullet points following each story are meant to hi-light the main points, people, or events of the story for a quick and easy reference. They may be used as a guide in directing discussion and formulating questions.
- The Bible references given for each story indicate only the book and chapter of the Bible from which each story is taken.

It is the goal and the desire of the writers of this series to set before God's people what has meant so much to them and what has sustained them through the years. In the end, what is left behind to strengthen the next generation and to glorify God is all that really matters.

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CREATION

Genesis 1



The word “Genesis” means the beginning. The Bible tells us about the beginning of everything in the story of Creation. There was a time when there was nothing except God. This we call eternity. God decided in divine love to create a universe, a place where God is living and ruling everything. His creation would be perfect. It would be home to the beautiful birds, the marvelous land animals and insects, the water creatures, great forests, mountains, plains, lakes, rivers and oceans, and the most wonderful creatures of all, man and woman who

would be His holy children forever.

God created the universe one part at a time. It was to run like a great clock, one day at a time. The first part He created was a huge muddy mass which was large enough to hold everything that would be in the universe. After this He said, “Let there be light” and there was a time for light and a time for darkness. This was the first day of Creation.

On the second day of Creation, God said, “Let there be a sky between the water. And let it divide the waters from the waters.” As soon as God said this, the sky took its place between the waters. There was blue sky above the watery mass.

On the third day of Creation, God said, “Let the water under the heaven be gathered together in one place and let the dry land appear.” Immediately, dry land came out of the water and mountains and plains appeared on the earth. The water formed into streams, rivers, lakes, and oceans. God then spoke to the dry land and said, “Let the earth produce grass, vegetation bearing seed and fruit trees bearing fruit.” Immediately, the dry land was covered with grass, full grown vegetation bearing seeds, and fruit trees bearing fruit. God saw that it was good.

On the fourth day of Creation, God spoke to the empty sky above the earth, “Let there be lights in the skies of the heavens to divide the day from the night, and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years and let them be for lights in the heavens to give light upon the earth.” Immediately, the sky became filled with planets and millions of stars to serve as a calendar and guide to the earth. God made two great lights for the earth, the sun to rule by day and furnish warmth and life to all vegetation and living things. The moon was created to rule the night. They would be like the tick and the tock of God’s universal clock. The earth was now set to run itself and support all living creatures. There was food, water, warmth, and above all proof of God’s perfection, power, protection, and love. God saw that it was good. But there was no life or sound on earth to respond to God’s greatness in praise and devotion.

The fifth day of Creation changed that. God spoke to the waters and said, “Let the waters produce many living creatures and birds that fly above the earth in the open sky.”

Immediately, the waters were filled with all kinds of creatures, great and small fish, and all other living creatures. The air was filled with the flight and songs of all kinds of birds. God granted them the ability to reproduce their own kind. God saw that it was good.

On the sixth day of Creation, God finished the creation of this earth and the universe. The sky and the streams, rivers, lakes, and oceans were full of His wonders, but the land was silent. God spoke to the land and said, “Let the earth produce all kinds of living creatures after their kind, cattle and creeping things, and beasts of the earth after his kind. And it was so.” Immediately, there were the small and large animals, even the dinosaurs.

The masterpiece of God’s creation was still to be created on the sixth day. God said, “Let **Us** make man in **Our** image, after our likeness and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. God created man in His own image, in the image of God, He created him, male and female.” The image of God means that they were created to be holy and perfect in body and soul with a perfect knowledge of God and His Will and the ability to keep it.

In the creation of the earth and its creatures, God simply said, “Let there be.” In the creation of man, God shaped an image out of dirt or clay, breathed into his nose the breath of life, and he became a living being having both a physical body and a spiritual soul. God named him Adam. God had Adam name all the animals of the earth. But there was no helper for Adam so God caused Adam to fall asleep. While Adam was sleeping, God took a rib out of Adam and made a woman. When Adam woke up, he knew what God had done and said, “This is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man.” Adam named her Eve. Adam then prophesied about marriage in the future, saying, “A man will leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and they will become one.”

- In the beginning God created all things
- 1st day – God created light
- 2nd day – God separated the waters from above and below the sky
- 3rd day – God created dry land and vegetation and brought the water together.
- 4th day – God created the sun, moon, stars and planets
- 5th day –God created the birds and fish
- 6th day – God created animals and man and woman in His image.
- When God said, “Let **Us** make man in **Our** image,” God showed that He is One God in whom there are three separate Persons. The Bible names them, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

ADAM AND EVE IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN

Genesis 2, 3



God made a special beautiful place called the Garden of Eden for Adam and Eve to live in and where they could have a family. It must have been around a great lake, for it was a place from which a huge river flowed which split into four large rivers outside the garden to water the entire earth. In the center of the garden were two special trees, the Tree of Life, and the Tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil. Adam and Eve were allowed to eat of all the trees, including the Tree of Life which gave everlasting life. But the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they were not to eat of it or they would die. God meant that to eat of it would be disobedience or sin, and they would lose their image of God, their holiness, and their perfect knowledge. Such eating would bring them under God's judgment. The Garden of Eden was meant to be their home from which they were to forever serve God in holiness while caring and ruling over the earth, including all its creatures.

When all of God's creation was completed, God ended the sixth day and saw that it was very good. On the seventh day, God did no more creating. He blessed the seventh day and made it to be a special day of rest for His creation.

How long this time of peace and holiness lasted, we don't know. But trouble began with Satan, the leader of many angels who rebelled and went contrary to God's will. The angels are created, holy, spiritual beings with minds and wills, but no body and having great power and wisdom. They were created within the six days of creation to be everlasting servants of God, caring for His universe and people. When many angels led by Satan rebelled against God, they were put out of Heaven. In judgment, God created hell for Satan and his followers.

Satan had been a great angel, but now he was angry and determined to hurt as much of God's world as possible, especially God's children, Adam and Eve. He used a snake to speak to Eve and tried to make God look selfish and unfair by asking whether God had really said that they could not eat from any tree in the garden. Eve defended God and said that they could eat from all of the trees except the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. If they touched it or ate from it, they would surely die. Satan said that they would not die, that God just said that because if they ate from the tree, they would come to be like God knowing both good and evil. Eve loved God and thought it would be good to be wise and to know both good and evil. She looked at the fruit on the tree and it looked good to eat. She picked some, ate it, and gave some to Adam who, also, ate it.

As soon as they ate from the fruit, they died, not physically, but spiritually. They were no longer in the image of God, but they were now sinful and felt guilt and shame. They even tried to cover themselves with leaves for clothing. When they heard a familiar sound, God coming to visit them in the garden, they were afraid and tried to hide. God

called, "Where are you?" Adam said that he heard God coming, and being naked he hid. God asked, "Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat of the tree I commanded you not to eat?" Adam said, "The woman you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." God turned to Eve and said, "What is this that you have done?" Eve blamed the snake and said, "The snake fooled me, and I did eat."

God had each one stand before Him, the snake, Satan, Adam, and Eve. One by one God judged them. The snake had been the most intelligent of all land creatures, but now it would be a creature of the dirt and crawl on its belly. God in love and mercy for Adam and Eve set before them and Satan the Promise of a Savior coming to earth to save man and to destroy Satan. God said, "I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her **Seed**. He shall crush your head, and you will crush his heel." God, in these words, guaranteed that He would send a Savior descended from Eve who would crush Satan and would suffer while doing so. There would always be a battle between the followers of Satan and the followers of the Seed of the woman, the coming Savior.

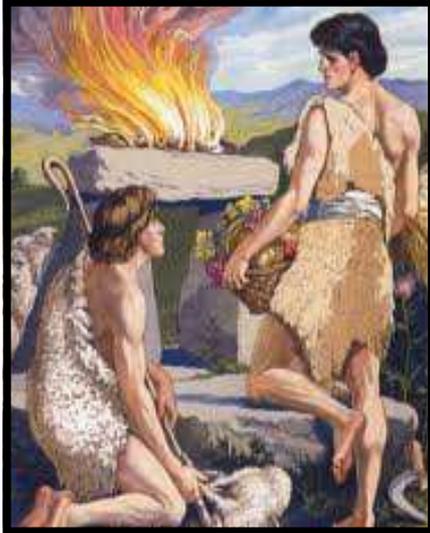
To Eve, God said that from then on the woman would be dependent on the man. She would come to feel sorrow and pain in life and in bearing children. She would depend on her husband, and he would be responsible for her. To Adam, God said that the land would no longer be under his dominion, but would fight him with thorns, thistles, and weeds. Man would eat the plants of the field, and would have to sweat and work hard to make a living for himself and his family. He would do this all his life, until he died and was buried, returning to the ground from which he was taken.

God then killed some animals and made Adam and Eve clothing from the skins. In this way God showed Adam and Eve that animals were also to be used for making their living. God then drove them out of the Garden of Eden and they settled outside of the garden. To make sure no man would enter the garden again, God placed Cherubim or angels and a flaming sword which turned every way to block the way to the Tree of Life, so that no one would eat from the Tree of Life and live forever in sin.

- God doesn't say when He created the angels; however God says that all creation was completed in six days. On the 7th day God rested.
- We do not know how long Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden.
- Satan tempted Eve. She ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and gave some fruit to Adam and he ate, making mankind and the world sinful.
- God judged the snake, Satan, Adam, and Eve and in divine love gave the Promise of the coming Savior.
- The word **Seed** in Genesis 3:15 is singular and points directly to Christ. The **Seed** is the promised **Messiah, Jesus Christ**, the descendant of Eve who became the Tree of Life for man.
- Adam and Eve had to live outside of the garden. God blocked the way to the Tree of Life.

CAIN AND ABEL

Genesis 4



Everything was different now. The beauty and peace of the Garden of Eden no longer surrounded them and the animals and birds were no longer tame and friendly. For the first time Adam and Eve saw danger from the animals and it was necessary to have secure shelter in places like caves which could be shielded by fire. Instead of eating only fruit and vegetation, many of the animals looked on one another as a new food source.

Adam and Eve were not primitive cavemen. They were very intelligent and physically powerful people; only one step removed from perfection. Adam began farming in a totally different and unfriendly world through hard work and sweat as God had foretold. One wonders how often they came near the Garden of Eden and were sad as they thought about the paradise they had lost. It must have made them confess their sins before God and plead for His blessings in the coming Savior.

Sometime after they left the Garden of Eden, God blessed them with a son. They called him “Cain” which means “Possession.” The name seems strange, but God had promised that a descendant of Eve would be the Savior. In naming him Cain, Eve was saying, “I have gotten a man with the Lord.” They thought that Cain was the promised Savior. When Eve’s second son was born, they named him “Abel” which means “Vanity, vapor, useless, not necessary.”

Adam and Eve taught their family of the Promise of the Savior and to worship God with their best, given to God as a burnt offering. Cain was a farmer like his father and Abel was a shepherd. At one time of worship, Cain brought an offering of his crop, but God rejected Cain and his offering. Abel brought a lamb offering, and God accepted him and his offering. How God showed His acceptance or rejection of the offering, we don’t know, perhaps by the smoke rising or not rising from the burnt sacrifice. Cain reacted in injured pride and fury. God even spoke to him, warning him that acceptance depended on the attitude and faith in worship. He should be careful because sin, like a wild animal, was crouching at his door wanting to destroy him, but Cain should overcome him.

Later Cain spoke to Abel when they met in the field. Cain was angry and killed Abel. When God asked Cain where Abel was, Cain replied, “I don’t know. Am I my brother’s keeper?” God knew what Cain had done and pronounced his judgment. Since Cain had killed his brother, and the ground soaked up Abel’s blood, the earth would treat Cain as cursed. It would never again produce good crops for him. For the rest of his life, Cain would always feel that someone was after him, and he would want to keep moving, never feeling at peace.

Instead of repenting and telling God that he was sorry for his sin, Cain told God that his punishment was unfair. It was more than he could stand. God had made Cain to be cursed from the earth itself. God had now withdrawn from him, had made his future to be that of a fugitive always in constant fear that his brothers would hunt him down to take vengeance and kill him. As a vagabond, he would always want something greater, but would never be able to find it. However, God did give a sign to Cain that nobody would kill him.

The end of Cain and his parting from Adam and Eve's family was very sad. He took his sister wife and left the place where God was worshiped. He moved east of Eden into the land of Nod where he built a city, naming it Enoch after his first born son. His descendants became the unbelievers of the world.

The descendants of Cain went into commerce and industry. Cain's great, great, great grandson, Lamech, had three sons who showed what great talents these early people of the earth possessed. His first son, Jabal, lived in tents and raised cattle. Jubal was a musician, inventing and playing wind and string instruments. Tubal-Cain was a miner and metal worker making items of brass and iron.

When Adam and Eve were 130 years old, Eve gave birth to Seth. Seth means "the appointed one, compensation." Eve said that Seth was the seed given her to replace Abel. Seth became the forerunner of the prophets and the bearer of God's Promise of the Savior. Seth began leading people to call on God's name, and to remember God's promise in His Covenant of the coming Savior, who would be Jesus Christ.

Tradition says that Adam and Eve had many children, 33 sons and 23 daughters. People lived long lives then, for God wanted the earth to have many people in it. Adam lived to be 930 years old. The Bible does not tell us how old Eve became. Seth lived to be 912

- When Cain was born, Eve thought he was the promised Savior and said, "I have gotten a man with the Lord."
- When Abel was born, He was named "vanity, vapor, useless, not necessary."
- Cain became angry when God rejected his sacrifice.
- Cain killed Abel. Cain was cursed and left home with his sister wife.
- Later Seth was born to replace Abel. Seth means "appointed one, compensation."
- Seth became the "Bearer of the Covenant or Promise of the Savior,"
- Tradition says Adam and Eve had 33 sons and 23 daughters.
- Adam lived to be 930 and Seth lived to be 912.

NOAH AND THE FLOOD

Genesis 6-9



Cain's descendants gradually led the believers in God's Covenant of the coming Savior to give up their faith and turn away from God. As a result, the world became ungodly, violent, and dangerous. After about 1656 years, only Noah, his wife, their three sons, and their wives were believers, only eight people out of a world full of people.

God had made the Covenant or Promise to Adam and Eve that He would send a Savior. God renewed this Promise to Noah and made him to be the bearer of His Covenant of the coming Savior. As for the world, God said He was going to destroy it. Noah was to build an ark because God was going to send a world-wide flood in which all birds, land animals, and people would die.

Noah was descended from Methuselah and his son, Lamech. Methuselah had even known Adam, and was the oldest man who ever lived, living 969 years. Both Methuselah and Lamech died before the Flood.

God gave Noah the plan of how the ark was to be built. It was to be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high, with a side ramp door and a 1 ½ foot window around the top. There were to be three stories in the ark, a place for Noah's family, supplies, and one pair of all animals which were not used in sacrifices. There were to be seven pairs of those animals used in sacrifices, such as cattle, sheep, and goats. Of every kind of bird, there were to be seven pairs.

During the 120 years in which Noah and his sons built the ark, He preached to the people about righteousness. They no doubt thought it was a joke because this huge boat was being built on dry land. When the ark was finished, Noah and his sons collected food for themselves, the animals, and the birds. Then God had the pairs of animals and birds come to the ark. When Noah and his family moved into the ark, God closed the door. The people must have been amazed and frightened to see what took place. Then came God's judgment.

The Bible says that God opened the windows of heaven, and it rained for forty days and nights without stopping. The underground rivers broke through the ground and poured their water on the ground, too. The waters became so high that they covered the highest mountains, 22½ feet, higher than Mt. Everest. There was no land left to be seen and only the ark floated all alone on the water. It was really a huge rectangular box that floated wherever the winds carried it. The water stayed this high for five months. All living things in the air and on the earth died, as God had warned.

After five months, God sent a wind to begin drying the earth. After seven months, the ark came to rest on Mt. Ararat. On the first day of the tenth month, the tops of the

mountains could be seen. Forty days later in the twelfth month, Noah set a raven free. It did not return but flew around over the earth. He also set a dove free to see if the lower lands were dry, but it returned. After a week, Noah sent the dove out again and it came back in the evening with an olive leaf in its beak. Noah knew that there was now dry land. He opened the top of the ark when the mountain on which the ark rested was dry. Twenty six days later the low lands were dry. After a year and ten days in the ark, God told Noah to leave the ark and let all the creatures in the ark go free.

When Noah left the ark, he built an altar and sacrificed from each kind of clean birds and animals, giving thanks to God for His love and protection. God spoke to Noah and his sons assuring them that they were now God's Covenant people from whom the Savior would come. God also promised that there would never again be a world-wide flood. As a reminder, God said the rainbow would always be a sign of His Covenant or Promise.

Noah and his family and his descendants followed the Euphrates River finally settling in the Plain of Shinar. Noah made wine from the grapes he raised, and drinking freely of it, he became drunk. Ham, his son, walked into his father's tent and saw him lying asleep, naked, and drunk. He told his brothers about it in a manner that dishonored his father. Shem and Japheth did not think it was to be taken lightly, so they walked in backwards and covered Noah. When Noah woke up, he knew what had happened.

Sometime later, Noah gave his sons their blessings. These blessings and prophecies cover the history of the world, since from these three men the nations in the world developed. The descendants of Ham, in the early history of the world, would be the most powerful, finally settling in Africa. They would be and remain a people that would be less powerful than those descended from his brothers, Shem and Japheth. Shem, from whom the Jews and Arabs came, would be the ancestor of the Savior's people, and would rule over Canaan and his descendants. Japheth, the ancestor of the Europeans, would become the most powerful. When Shem would leave his tent of blessing, that of being God's Messianic people, then Japheth would move into the tent of Shem. In doing this, Japheth would take Shem's place as God's people and be witnesses of Christ as the Savior in the latter days of the world. Japheth would have dominion over his brothers. History has followed this prophesy and will continue to do so until Judgment Day.

- God gave Noah and his sons 120 years to build an ark.
- In judgment, God sent a world-wide flood to destroy everything living on earth.
- Noah, his wife, their sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and their wives were saved in the ark with pairs of animals and birds, being in the ark a year and ten days.
- It rained 40 days and nights and the water covered Mt. Everest by 22½ feet.
- God renewed His Messianic Covenant with Noah. The rainbow in the sky was to remind the world of God's Promise.

THE TOWER OF BABEL

Genesis 11



It must have felt strange to Noah and his family to be the only people in the world, a little group of eight, Noah and his wife, Shem, Ham, and Japheth and their wives. The Flood had changed the earth. When they came to the Plain of Shinar, it seemed like a good place to stay and build a city. God told them to have children to fill the earth with people again.

Years passed and in about one hundred years there were perhaps 30,000 people on earth.

Nobody wanted to leave the city, yet they knew that God had commanded them to spread out over the earth. Fearing that God could destroy them with another flood, they decided to build a huge and high water-proof tower so they would be safe in a flood. This would, also, leave a monument so that people in the future would talk about how great they were. They all spoke one language and they all knew the same God. Yet they were ready to disobey God, stay together, and show how united and strong they were.

Noah, Shem, Ham and Japheth were still alive. The Bible tells us that Noah lived to be 950 years old. He lived about 350 years after the Flood. Shem lived 400 years after the Tower of Babel, outliving Abraham by 33 years. Shem lived to be 600 years old.

God gently but firmly taught the people a lesson and forced them to obey. Overnight God simply changed the one language which they spoke into many. The next morning the people were confused, as they could not speak with everyone. They had to find those who spoke their language. The language groups banded together and scattered over the earth. This city and tower became known as Babel and the Tower of Babel, because God confused the languages.

As the various groups left, they took with them their knowledge of God, Creation, the Promise of a Savior, the Flood, and the punishment for unbelief and sin. All heathen religions developed from this knowledge. The truths of God they once had known at Babel gradually changed from the worship of one God into the belief that there were many gods with no Savior from sin.

God used Shem and his descendants to keep the truths of God's Promise of the coming Messiah or Savior alive. It seems probable that Shem was among the first of God's people to migrate to Canaan where he founded the city of Salem which later became Jerusalem, the spiritual center of God's people. He would then have become King Melchizedek whom Abraham acknowledged as the priest of the true God.

God's people worshiped the true God, but within two hundred years after Babel, they began worshiping the moon god and other gods in addition to the true God.

- The people built the Tower of Babel, disobeying God's command to spread out over the earth. The people wanted to become great and to build a water-proof tower to protect them from any flood that God might send.
- God changed the one languages into many forcing them to leave and spread out over the earth.
- Noah lived to be 950 years old, living 350 years after the Flood.
- Shem lived 400 years after the Tower of Babel, outliving Abraham by 33 years.
- As we begin to study the stories of Abraham, you will read about Abraham meeting King Melchizedek at Salem, which became the city of Jerusalem.
- The city of Babel continued under Nimrod the king who was a descendant of Ham. The descendants of Ham were dominant at this time.
- It seems that the people from Shem and Japheth were the majority of those who left. There is no record of how many left, however, each of these groups formed the nations of the early history of the world.

ABRAHAM, THE FATHER OF ALL BELIEVERS

Genesis 12-14



Some of the descendants of Shem settled in Mesopotamia in the vicinity of Haran. There they worshiped both the moon god and the true God. One of them named Terah, born about 2236 B.C., moved to Ur of the Chaldees which was dedicated to the moon god, Ur Nannar. In Ur, Terah had three sons, Nahor, Haran, and Abram. Abram was born about 2166 B.C., about three hundred years after the Flood. Haran died there leaving three children, Lot, Micah and Iscah. Terah's wife died also and when he remarried, he had another daughter named Sarai, who was about ten years younger than Abram. Abram married Sarai, his half-sister.

Sometime later, God spoke to Abram, later called Abraham, and told him to leave Ur with his family and go to a land which God had chosen. God told Abram that he would be the ancestor of the coming Savior or Messiah. His descendants would be the cradle and heralds of the Messiah. Terah, knowing this, moved back to the vicinity of Haran. Abram remained in Haran about fifteen years until his father died. Abram then took Sarai and his nephew Lot following God's guidance to the land of Canaan. This land was to become the land of God's people and the place of God's redemption in Jesus Christ. God had chosen Abram to be the bearer of His Covenant which had been given to Adam and Eve and again to Noah.

The land of Canaan was settled by various small tribes. Abram was very wealthy, having many shepherds. Since Abram had so many shepherds, he was respected and looked on as a powerful leader. He first settled near Shechem, an important city. From there he moved near Bethel and Ai. In each of these places he openly worshiped the one true God. The heathen tribes around him worshiped many gods, but in this way they came to know Abram as the worshipper of a different God.

When there was no rain and a possible drought and famine coming, Abram moved to the land of Egypt to find pasture and water. There in Egypt Abram lied about Sarai saying that she was his sister. She was really his half-sister because she was the daughter of Terah's second wife. Abram was afraid that because of Sarai's beauty, the Pharaoh would take her away from him and kill him. Pharaoh heard of Sarai's beauty and brought her to the palace, planning to marry her. Because of Sarai, he gave rich gifts and some slaves to Abram. God however caused Pharaoh to know that Sarai was Abram's wife. Pharaoh was angry and ordered Abram to leave Egypt with Sarai, Lot, and all they had.

When Abram returned to Bethel in Canaan, the drought seems to have come to an end. Abram and Lot had so many shepherds and herds that there was not enough pasture land and water for both of them in one place. Abram had over three hundred shepherds and Lot probably had about two hundred. Lot's shepherds started fighting with Abram's over

the pasture land and water. Abram went to Lot and said that there should be no fighting, that they should separate. Lot should choose wherever he wanted to go, and Abram would go the other way. Lot agreed and chose the beautiful Jordan Valley which made one think of the Garden of Eden. Abram moved to Mamre in Hebron.

However, in the Jordan Valley where Lot had chosen to move, there were five cities known for their evil. Sodom, the main city, first became his business center, then he and his family moved into Sodom. Lot, though he did not like the evil, became a judge of Sodom thus becoming a leader of this wicked city.

About fourteen years earlier, a group of Eastern kings had conquered this area putting the cities under tribute. Finally, these cities rebelled and the Eastern kings came with a powerful army and defeated the kings of the five cities around Sodom. They looted the cities, took everyone captive, including Lot and his family. One of the prisoners, perhaps a shepherd of Lot, escaped and reported this to Abram. Abram asked his three Amorite allies, Mamre, Eshkol, and Anner, for their help. Abram joined his armed shepherds with these allies and they trailed the Eastern kings. During the night they attacked and defeated them. Abram and his allies brought back all the captives and plunder that the Eastern kings had taken.

As they returned, they came near the city of Salem, meaning the “City of Peace.” Salem later on became Jerusalem. A mysterious man, Melchizedek, which means King of Righteousness, was king there. He brought out food and drink for the army and the freed captives. He was the priest of the Most High God and he blessed Abram in the name of the Most High God. Abram recognized him as the priest of God and gave him a tithe of the plunder. It is not known for sure who he was, because there is no record given of his father or mother, but it seems he could have been Shem. Shem, who worshiped the true God, would still have been alive at this time.

The king of Sodom came to Abram saying that he could keep all the plunder. Abram replied, “Take the people and what belongs to Sodom and go. I don’t want a shoe lace from you. I don’t want you to say that you made Abram rich.” The king took all his people and their goods, including Lot, and his family, and returned to Sodom.

- In Ur of the Chaldees, God chose Abram to be the bearer of the Covenant of the coming Savior. He was told to go to the land that God would show him.
- Abram married his half-sister, Sarai, and moved with his father, Terah, and Lot to Haran where they stayed until his father died.
- .Because of a drought, Abram, Sarai and Lot went to Egypt where Abram lied, saying that Sarai was his sister. Pharaoh sent them out of Egypt.
- Returning to Canaan, Lot and Abram separated. Lot moved to the city of Sodom.
- Abram met Melchizedek, a priest of the most high God, at Salem, later Jerusalem.
- The Bible in Hebrews chapter 5 pictures Melchizedek as a type of Christ.

GOD'S MESSIANIC COVENANT IS GIVEN TO ABRAM Genesis 15-17



Years before, God called Abram to leave Ur of the Chaldees to go to the land He would show him. The Lord set before Abram the Messianic Covenant or Promise with four blessings. 1) God would make Abram into a great nation. 2) God would bless Abram, make his name great, and make him a blessing. 3) God would bless those who would bless him and curse those who cursed him. 4) In Abram, all the people on earth would be blessed.

In these words, God made Abram the bearer of the Messianic Covenant. The Messiah, the Savior of the world, would be born from his descendants.

God's Messianic Covenant assured mankind that God would send a Savior to this earth to suffer and die to forgive the sins of mankind, reconcile God to man, and open the door of heaven to all who would believe in Him. In this way, the world would be blessed in Abram.

After Abram and Sarai had been in Canaan about ten years they still had no son to be the Covenant bearer. The Divine Word and Spokesman for God (Jesus in His Old Testament role), came to Abram in a vision to renew the promise of a son and point to the future of Abram's descendants. He told Abram to step outside and see the numberless stars, so his descendants would be. Abram believed the Divine Word and God counted it to Abram for righteousness.

The Divine Word told Abram to prepare a special covenant sacrifice, a three year old heifer, a three year old female goat, a three year old ram, a turtle dove and a young pigeon. The animals were cut in half and the pieces laid opposite each other with a path between for the covenant makers to walk on together. The birds, left whole, were laid opposite each other. After Abram prepared the sacrifice, God let him scare away the hawks and vultures all day. As it got dark, Abram fell asleep and woke up to see God passing between the pieces in a fire-pot that was burning and smoking. Abram only watched, as it was God's Covenant, not Abram's. In this renewed Covenant, God promised that Abram's heir would be Abram's son and that his descendants would possess the land some four hundred years later.

No doubt Abram told Sarai about the renewal of the promise of a son. God had said that the son would be Abram's son. He did not say that Sarai would be the mother. There was a law that said a slave's child could be claimed by the owner as her own son. Sarai did a very foolish thing trying to make God's promise come true by giving Hagar, her Egyptian slave, to Abram as a concubine or half-wife. When Hagar saw that she was going to have a child from Abram, she began to act as though Sarai was not as good as she was, because she could not have a child. Sarai became angry and complained to

Abram who told her to do as she pleased. Sarai became so nasty to Hagar that Hagar ran away into the desert.

In the Old Testament, Jesus, being God's Son, was also called the Divine Messenger or the Angel of the Lord. As the Angel of the Lord, He came to Hagar by a place where there was water and told her to go back and submit to Sarai. Her son would be called "Ishmael," and God would bless him. Ishmael means "God hears." Hagar called the Angel of the Lord, "You are the God who sees." She said, "Have I also here seen Him who sees me?" This is the first recorded appearance of Jesus as the Angel of the Lord. This appearance as the Angel of the Lord became His oft repeated role in the Old Testament. Often when He appeared, He was worshipped as God.

Abram was 86 years old when Ishmael was born. Abram continued living in Mamre near Hebron. We know nothing about this thirteen year period. When Abram was 99, God appeared to him and taught him more about His Covenant with him. God changed Abram's name meaning "Exalted Father," to "Abraham" meaning "Father of Nations." He changed Sarai's name, meaning "Beautiful Princess," to "Sarah" or "Mother of a People."

God told Abraham that he and Sarah would have a son and he was to be called "Isaac." Isaac means "Laughter," because people could be happy and rejoice since the next bearer of the Covenant was born. The Promise of a Savior would continue in Isaac. God, also, told Abraham that Ishmael would become a nation and that twelve rulers would descend from him.

- In Canaan, God renewed His Covenant to Abram that he would have a son, who would be the bearer of the Covenant. He also foretold that the land would be given to Abram's descendants after four hundred years.
- Sarah tried to fulfill God's promise of a son by giving her slave, Hagar, to Abram and claiming Hagar's son as their own.
- Hagar despised Sarai for not having a child. Sarai caused Hagar to run away.
- The Angel of the Lord appeared to Hagar, sent her back to Sarai, and said the name of her son was to be Ishmael.
- Ishmael was born to Hagar. God said that he would become a great nation.
- God changed Sarai's name to Sarah and Abram to Abraham.
- God said their son was to be named "Isaac", meaning "Laughter" because people could rejoice since God's Messianic Covenant would continue in Isaac.

THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM

Genesis 18-20



Three months later, three Messengers came to Abraham as he was sitting by his tent. Abraham invited them to stay with him and he prepared a special meal for them. Abraham knew that these were heavenly Messengers. One was God the Father, one was the Angel of the Lord, and perhaps the third was the Holy Spirit.

After the meal, God the Father told Abraham that Sarah would have a son in nine months. Sarah heard this and laughed, because she knew she was too old to have a child. God said to her, “Why did you laugh? Sarah replied that she had not laughed. God said, “You did laugh. Is anything too hard for God?”

The two heavenly Messengers then left and went on their way to Sodom. One Messenger, God the Father, stayed behind and told Abraham that He was going down to Sodom to see its evil and destroy it. Abraham remembered Lot and his family and asked God to spare the city if He found 50 righteous people (believers in the true God). God said He would spare the city if He found 50 righteous there. Abraham asked God to spare the city if there were 40. God said He would spare the city if there were 40. Again Abraham pleaded that it would be spared if there were 30, then 20. Finally Abram asked if God would spare the city if only 10 believers were left. Lot seems to have had children who were married and two daughters at home, plus his many shepherds. Surely there would be ten believers, wouldn't there? God said He would spare Sodom if there were ten.

When the heavenly Messengers arrived in Sodom, Lot invited them to his house. After supper the men of the city tried to force Lot to give the Messengers to them. Instead, the Messengers blinded the whole crowd so they could not find the door. They told Lot to get out of Sodom before dawn because Sodom was going to be destroyed. Lot went to the homes of his married daughters but they laughed at him.

Finally, just before dawn, the Messengers dragged Lot, his wife, and two daughters to the city gate and told them to run to the mountains. Lot begged to go to the small town of Zoar. The One Messenger told him that He would spare the city for Lot's sake, but to hurry and not look back. He then rained down fire and brimstone from God the Father on the whole area, destroying Sodom and three other cities. Lot's wife looked back at the city she was leaving and turned into a pillar of salt. Lot and his two daughters did not stop in Zoar, but in fear ran to the mountains.

(Today this whole area is a desert.)

Early the next morning, Abraham looked toward Sodom and saw that the whole horizon was smoking and burning. He knew that God had not found 10 believers in the city of Sodom.

The Bible does not tell us whether Lot and Abraham ever met again.

There in the mountains Lot and his daughters lived in a cave. The daughters made their father drunk and both of them had a son by him. One daughter named her son, "Moab," meaning "son of my father." The other daughter named her son, "Ammon," meaning "son of my relative." Many years later, Lot's sons by his daughters became the nations of Moab and Ammon, both bitter enemies of Abraham's descendants, the nation of Israel.

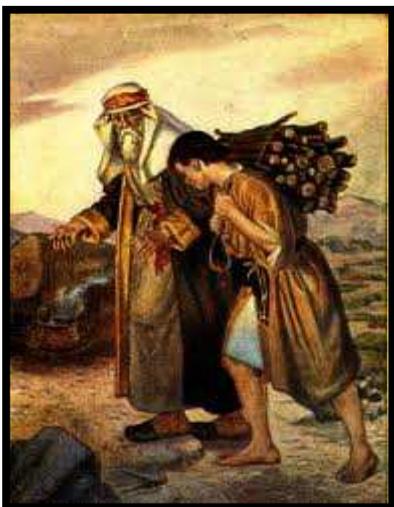
Soon after the destruction of Sodom, Abraham moved from Mamre to Gerar, a city in the land of the Philistines. There he made the same mistake that he made in Egypt, saying that Sarah was his sister. Abimelech, the king, brought her to the palace and planned to marry her. God appeared to Abimelech in a dream and told him that Sarah was Abraham's wife, to return her to Abraham or die. Abimelech rebuked Abraham and gave Sarah back to him. He gave Abraham gifts of slaves, sheep and cattle, and a thousand pieces of silver to be a veil to Sarah. In this way, he rebuked Sarah, telling her to always appear as a married woman.

Abimelech allowed Abraham to move to the area of Beersheba.

- Abraham prepared a meal for the three heavenly Messengers who came to him.
- One of the heavenly Messengers, God the Father, told Abraham that Sarah would give birth to a son in nine months.
- Sarah was rebuked by God for laughing, as she felt she was too old to have a son.
- The two heavenly Messengers left to go to Sodom.
- God told Abraham that He was going down to destroy the wicked city of Sodom.
- Abraham, remembering Lot and his family, pleaded that if God found 10 believers in the true God, that He would spare the city.
- The two heavenly Messengers told Lot, his wife, and two daughters to leave the city as it would be destroyed.
- Sodom and the surrounding area was destroyed by fire and brimstone. Lot's wife looked back and became a pillar of salt. Lot and his daughters ran to the mountains.
- Both daughters had sons from their father. From these two sons came the nations of Moab and Ammon, the Moabites and the Ammonites.
- Abraham again called Sarah his sister in the land of the Philistines, and they moved to the area of Beersheba.

ABRAHAM AND ISAAC

Genesis 21-23



As God had foretold, Isaac was born to Sarah and Abraham the year after the destruction of Sodom and the surrounding cities by the Angel of the Lord. Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90. When Isaac was weaned, Abraham held a celebration. Ishmael the son of Hagar, about fourteen years old, made fun of Isaac. Sarah demanded that Ishmael be sent away. He was the son of a slave, but Isaac was the free born son of promise to Abraham and Sarah. Sarah would not allow Ishmael to be an heir of Abraham. Abraham was upset, but God told him that Isaac was the rightful heir and the bearer of the Covenant of the coming Savior.

Abraham gave Hagar some food and water and sent her and Ishmael away. They wandered in the desert until the water was gone, then she had Ishmael lie down in the shade of a desert bush. Crying, she went a little distance away not wanting to see him die of thirst. God heard Ishmael crying and again the Angel of the Lord called to Hagar from heaven and told her to go to Ishmael and lead him to a nearby spring of water. He told Hagar that He would make Ishmael into a great nation. They both revived and went on to build a home in the desert where Ishmael grew up to be an archer. Hagar found an Egyptian young woman to be Ishmael's wife. God had promised that Ishmael would become the leader of a great nation. The nation of Edom and twelve rulers descended from him.

Time passed and Isaac grew into a strong young man. Suddenly, God tested Abraham's faith by telling him to take Isaac and go to the mountains of Moriah where he was to offer Isaac as a sacrifice to God. Abraham obeyed without questioning. Early the next morning, Abraham split wood for the sacrifice, called two of his men to go along, got Isaac and left. It was a three day's journey to the mountains of Moriah, a range of hills on which Jerusalem is now built. (Melchizedek was king of Salem in these hills). Abraham told his men to guard the camp, that he and Isaac would go worship and return.

As they began climbing the mountain, Isaac asked where the lamb was. He was carrying all the wood, his father had the fire and the knife, but there was no lamb. Abraham simply said that God would provide the lamb. When they came to the place that God designated, they built the altar Abraham tied Isaac and laid him on it. Isaac now knew God's command and offered no protest. When Abraham drew his knife to kill Isaac, the Angel of the Lord called out, "Abraham, Abraham." "Here I am," Abraham replied. The Angel of the Lord told Abraham not to kill Isaac, that he had shown his faith and had not kept his son from Him. Abraham heard a sound and looking around saw a wild ram caught by its horns in a thicket. Abraham released Isaac and they offered the ram instead. Abraham named the place "Jehovah Jireh" meaning, "In the mount of the Lord, God will provide." Once again the Angel of the Lord spoke and said that since

Abraham had not refused to offer his son to Him and had shown such love and obedience, that He would bless him in his descendants. In Abraham the whole world would be blessed and the Messiah would come from his descendants. Abraham and Isaac returned to camp after worshiping as Abraham had said.

Here we see Isaac as a type of Christ. He was the son of promise and the living bearer of the Messianic Promise. Jesus was God's Son of Promise. God named the place where Isaac was to be offered on the hills of Moriah. This was the place where Jesus was offered. Salem, the City of Peace, was in the hills of Moriah. Salem, later called Jerusalem, was the city of God's peace to the whole world. Isaac carried the wood on which he was to be sacrificed. Jesus carried the wood on which He was sacrificed. Isaac was God's chosen lamb for sacrifice. Isaac was spared from being sacrificed by the substitution of a ram. Years later, God would sacrifice His Lamb on the same Hills of Moriah as the only Substitute for the sins of the whole world. For Jesus there could be no substitute. He was the only offering that could bring everlasting peace to a sin cursed world. When Isaac questioned where the lamb was, he was told that God would provide the lamb. When man could provide no lamb for his sins, God provided His Lamb for the sins of all mankind.

Isaac never forgot this time. Scripture says that when Jacob, his son, spoke about the God of his father, Isaac, and his grandfather, Abraham, he spoke of the God of Abraham and the fear of his father, Isaac.

At this time, the Hittites took over the area around Hebron. It seems that because of his camp of many years in Mamre at Hebron, Abraham moved back to Mamre to claim his land. Sometime later, Sarah died at the age of 127. Abraham met with the leaders of the Hittites, who showed him great respect. He bought from the Hittites the Cave of Machpelah with its surrounding fields as a burial place for his family. There he buried Sarah.

- Isaac was born to Sarah and Abraham when Abraham was 100 and Sarah 90.
- Abraham sent Hagar and Ishmael away, because Isaac was the son of promise.
- God tested Abraham's faith by asking Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac.
- The Angel of the Lord provided a ram for the sacrifice instead of Isaac on the hills of Moriah.
- This was the place that God's Son, the Lord Jesus, became the sacrifice to atone for all sin. This place became Jerusalem, the City of Peace.
- Abraham moved back to Mamre after the Hittites conquered the area.
- Sarah died at the age of 127 and was buried in the Cave of Machpelah which Abraham had bought from the Hittites for a burial place for his family.

ISAAC AND REBEKAH

Genesis 24-26



Three years after the burial of Sarah, Abraham decided it was time for Isaac to get married. Abraham was 140 years old and Isaac was 40. As is still the custom today in the East, parents arranged the marriage of their children. Abraham called in his foreman, Eliezer, and made him swear to go to the family home in Haran and bring back a wife for Isaac. Eliezer was not to let Isaac go to the family home in Haran.

Eliezer set up a caravan of ten camels, a public demonstration of power and wealth which would discourage any bandits. When he arrived in Haran, he made his camels lie down and waited for the young women of the city to come to get water. He prayed asking God to send the right woman for Isaac and that he would know her by asking her for a drink. If she said “yes” and would offer to water his camels, then she would be the one for Isaac. He had hardly finished his prayer when a young woman came to get water. He asked her for a drink. She gave him the water and said that she would water the camels, also. He gave her some valuable jewelry and asked for her name. She said that she was Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, son of Nahor, Abraham’s brother. She said that he could stay in their home. Eliezer simply bowed his head and thanked God out loud. Rebekah, hearing the prayer and the name of Abraham, ran home to tell her family. When Rebekah’s brother, Laban, heard about Eliezer and saw the valuable jewelry, he ran to bring Eliezer and the camels to their home.

A special supper was made for Eliezer, but he would not eat until he told them about his mission. He told about the wealth of Abraham, the death of Sarah, and the need of a wife for Isaac. He, also, told them about his prayer at the well and God’s immediate answer. He asked that Rebekah go back with him and become Isaac’s wife. Everyone was amazed but they said it certainly came from God’s guidance. They agreed that Rebekah should go. The next morning Eliezer wanted to leave with Rebekah, but the family asked for some time. When Rebekah was asked, she said that she would go and they left on their journey. When they arrived at Isaac’s home, she became his wife.

For twenty years Isaac and Rebekah had no children. Isaac prayed to God and when he was 60, God granted them a set of twins, Esau, the first born, and Jacob. God told Rebekah that her two sons would become two nations, the younger becoming the greater. In time Esau would become the favorite son of Isaac while Jacob would be the favorite son of Rebekah.

After Sarah’s death, Abraham married Keturah and they had six sons. Abraham, also, had some concubines who had children. Before Abraham died, he gave them all gifts and

sent them to the East. Their descendants joined Ishmael's descendants and have become the Arabs of today.

Even though Isaac lived in the area of Beersheba in the land of the Philistines and Abraham who lived in Mamre, Abraham got to know Isaac and Rebekah's sons, Esau and Jacob, for fifteen years before he died at the age of 175. Isaac and Ishmael buried Abraham by Sarah in the Cave of Machpelah.

After the death and burial of Abraham, a famine developed. Isaac moved to the city of Gerar where Abimelech was king of the Philistines. At first he lived near the palace. Rebekah was beautiful and when Isaac was asked about her, he said that she was his sister, copying the sin of his father, Abraham. One day Isaac and Rebekah were showing affection to one another, and Abimelech saw it from a window in the palace. He called for Isaac and asked why he had lied. Isaac said he did it so that no one would kill him to get Rebekah. The heathen king rebuked him and published an edict that anyone who tried to harm Isaac or Rebekah would be executed.

Isaac stayed in the area of Gerar and God blessed him year after year until he came to have huge flocks and many servants. Finally, Abimelech told Isaac to move away because he was stronger than the Philistines. Isaac re-dug Abraham's wells that the Philistines had filled with dirt and rocks. He finally dug a well and built an altar there naming it Sheba. This place later became Beersheba.

- When Isaac was 40, Abraham sent Eliezier to the family home at Haran to find a wife for Isaac. Rebekah agreed to leave her family and marry Isaac.
- After twenty years, twin boys, Esau and Jacob, were born to Isaac and Rebekah.
- Abraham died at the age of 175 and was buried in the Cave of Machpelah beside Sarah by Isaac and Ishmael.
- A famine forced Isaac to move with his family to Gerar where he made the same mistake as his father, saying Rebekah was his sister.
- King Abimelech rebuked Isaac and finally told Isaac to move away from Gerar. Isaac moved back to Beersheba. After Abraham died, he moved back to Mamre and took over his father's possessions.

JACOB STEALS THE BIRTHRIGHT

Genesis 27-28



Isaac's sons were very different. Esau, the first born, had heavy red hair and was a skilled hunter, having a love of earthly power and pleasure. His twin brother, Jacob, was not hairy. He was an excellent shepherd. Jacob envied Esau and wanted the earthly power that went with being the first born and heir of the Promise. Finally he got Esau to sell him his birthright for some food when Esau returned home very hungry from a hunting trip. By the time Esau was forty, he had married two Hitite women who were a source of grief to both Isaac and Rebekah.

Isaac loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob and wanted him to be the bearer of the Promise. Isaac and Rebekah both knew God's prophesy about their sons that Jacob would be the greater, but Isaac seemed ready to give the blessing to Esau. Rebekah, also remembered God's words, and she decided to make Jacob receive the Messianic Blessing.

When Isaac was about 137 years old and blind, he felt that his death might come soon. He called for Esau and told him to take his bow and shoot a deer, then make a special deer-stew that he loved. He said that after eating it he would give Esau his blessing, which would include the Messianic Blessing of the first born.

Rebekah heard what Isaac said and quickly called Jacob telling him to kill and bring her two baby goats. She would make the stew that Isaac loved and Jacob could take it to his father pretending to be Esau. Jacob was afraid Isaac would feel his hands because Esau was very hairy and he was not. Isaac would know that he was Jacob and he would be cursed by an angry father instead of being blessed. Rebekah cut the skin of the baby goat to cover the back of Jacob's hands and neck. She put a robe of Esau on Jacob to do away with the smell of sheep, and sent him in to fool his blind father and get Esau's blessing. Jacob had to try to sound like Esau. Isaac was surprised when he heard the voice telling him to eat the stew which he had prepared. He was suspicious and had Jacob come to him so he could feel his hands. Isaac said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, the hands are the hands of Esau." He smelled the robe and it smelled like Esau. Jacob had to lie to his father five times.

Isaac ate the stew and gave Jacob the blessing of the first-born which included the promise of being the ancestor of the coming Savior. Jacob had barely left when Esau came in with his stew for he had had good luck hunting. Isaac was so upset that he shook and said that Jacob had stolen the blessing. Esau was furious and said that when Isaac died, he would kill Jacob for cheating him out of his birthright and blessing.

Rebekah asked Isaac to tell Jacob to go to her brother Laban at Haran, a journey of about six hundred miles. He was to stay there and get married. When Isaac was dead, she would send for him to return. (But Rebekah never saw Jacob again, as she died not Isaac. After God brought Jacob back, Isaac lived about fourteen more years.)

On Jacob's journey to Haran, he came to the city of Luz where he found a place in the field to spend the night. He set up a stone for a pillow and went to sleep. As he slept, he had a wonderful dream. In his dream he saw the Angel of the Lord standing at the top of a ladder which reached all the way from heaven down to the place where he was. Angels were coming down the ladder to the earth and going back up the ladder to the Angel of the Lord.

The Angel of the Lord said that He was the God of Abraham and his father Isaac. He told Jacob that his descendants, the believers in Jesus the Savior, the coming Messiah, would be from all over the world. They would be like dust, there would be so many. The whole world would be blessed through His coming. This was the promise that Jesus would be born from Jacob's descendants. The Angel of the Lord said that He would be with Jacob at Laban's home and that He would bring Jacob safely back to his home again.

Jacob woke up and said that it was God who was there with him. He said that this place was the House of God, the Gate of Heaven. He named it Bethel, meaning "the House of God." He took the stone he had used for a pillow and set it up as a pillar dedicating it to God by pouring olive oil on it. Jacob vowed or made a promise to the Angel of the Lord that if He would support him and bring him back to his father Isaac's home in peace, then the Angel of the Lord would be his God and he would serve, worship, and sacrifice to Him as long as he lived.

- Jacob deceived his father, Isaac, and received the birthright and blessing of the first born and the Messianic Blessing.
- Isaac sent Jacob to his uncle Laban in Haran.
- Jacob had a dream of angels going up and down a ladder which reached from heaven to earth.
- The Angel of the Lord spoke to Jacob from the top of the ladder and told Jacob that He was the God of Abraham and Isaac. God's Covenant was repeated to Jacob, as Jacob was now the bearer of God's Messianic Covenant.
- Jacob vowed to serve, worship, and sacrifice to the Angel of the Lord as his God

JACOB WORKS FOR LABAN

Genesis 29-31



When Jacob arrived safely early in the afternoon at the well of Haran, he saw three flocks of sheep waiting to be watered. He asked why they were gathering at the well so early in the day. The shepherd told him that they all waited for everyone to come to the well, and then they would remove the stone cover and water all the flocks. Jacob asked about Laban. They pointed to a flock coming to the well and said that it was Laban's flock being led by Rachel, his daughter. Jacob went up to the well, removed the capstone and watered Rachel's sheep. He told Rachel that he was the son of Rebekah. Rachel was so excited that she ran home to tell Laban, her father. Laban came to the well and took Jacob to his home. Jacob told Laban all that had happened. Jacob was about 77 years old at this time

After Jacob had been there a month, Laban noticed that Jacob was an unusually good shepherd. He wanted to make a deal with Jacob to work for him. Jacob had fallen in love with Rachel, so he said that he would work seven years for nothing, if he could then marry Rachel. Laban agreed. God's school for Jacob was now going to begin. Jacob had been a cheater, but Jacob was to find that Laban was a master cheat.

The seven years passed by quickly, and the wedding was set. In that country the brides were so heavily veiled at their wedding that you could not see the face of the bride. After the first day of celebration was over, Jacob was shocked to find that he had married Leah, Rachel's older sister. He had been cheated. Being very angry, he went to Laban who told him that the oldest daughter had to be married first. Since weddings were celebrated for a week, Laban told Jacob that he would make another deal. If Jacob would work another seven years for nothing, after the week of celebration for Leah was over, Jacob could marry Rachel the following week. Jacob would have to work another seven years for nothing. This meant that he would have worked fourteen years with no wages.

Those years were difficult, as Jacob was like a slave to Laban. In those days, wives were valued for the number of sons they could have. Leah had four sons and Rachel had none. Rachel then gave her maid Bilhah to Jacob as a concubine and she had two sons. Leah then gave her maid Zilpah to Jacob as a concubine and she had two sons. Leah then had two more sons and a daughter. Finally Rachel gave birth to a son named Joseph. After the fourteen years, Jacob had no wealth, two wives, two concubines, eleven sons and one daughter. He wanted to go home.

Because God was blessing Jacob, Laban had become very wealthy. Laban did not want Jacob to leave, so he said that they should make another deal. This time Jacob stated that he would stay and what his wages would be. He said that he would take for himself all

the speckled and spotted cattle, the brown sheep and the spotted and speckled goats from Laban's flocks. It seemed like a good deal to Laban because the off-colored cattle were not as many as the solid colored animals. After Jacob took the off-colored animals from Laban's flocks, Laban had Jacob put a distance of about a three day's journey or about thirty miles between his flocks and Jacob's flock. Jacob had to care for Laban's flocks, and leave his flocks to his wives and children.

God's schooling had changed Jacob, as now he turned to God for His blessings in a most unusual way. Jacob took branches of the green poplar, hazel, and chestnut trees, stripping narrow pieces of bark so that the straight rods would have white streaks in them. He, also, dug holes into the bark of other branches so they would be spotted. At the proper time for planning the birth of cattle, sheep, and goats, he would put the rods in front of the animals so that they would see them when they came to drink. He was careful to do this only to the strong animals. God blessed Jacob so that the young would be off-colored. These he added to his flock. Laban tried again and again to change the deal. If Laban wanted all the streaked animals, God had them born spotted. If he wanted all the spotted, they were born streaked. At the end of six more years, Jacob was a very wealthy man having large flocks of sheep, cattle, and goats, many servants, camels and donkeys.

One night the Angel of the Lord spoke to Jacob in a dream. After telling Jacob that He was the God of Bethel who had appeared to him twenty years before while he was sleeping at Bethel, He reminded Jacob of the anointed stone or pillar that Jacob had set up and the vow that he had made to Him. He told Jacob to return to his home. Jacob and his family left at a time when Laban was away shearing sheep. Rachel did a very foolish thing by stealing her father's little household gods or idols. Perhaps they had something to do with property ownership.

Three days passed before Laban found out that Jacob had left. Laban got a large armed party together and caught up with Jacob at Mt. Gilead. God warned Laban in a dream not to harm Jacob. When Laban met Jacob, he scolded him for leaving and accused him of stealing his gods. He searched the camp, but found nothing. Rachel was sitting on them in her tent saying that she was not feeling well. When Laban did not find them, Jacob scolded Laban. They settled things by having a feast and set up a monument to their meeting and peaceful parting. Laban named the place "Mizpah," which has a beautiful meaning, "The Lord watch between you and me when we are absent one from another." Laban then returned home and Jacob continued his journey to his home.

- Jacob worked for his Uncle Laban for seven years to be able to marry Rachel.
- Jacob was deceived and found he had married Leah, Rachel's older sister.
- Jacob married Rachel and worked another seven years for Laban.
- After fourteen years he had 2 wives, 2 concubines, 11 sons, and 1 daughter.
- Jacob and Laban made a new deal. God made Jacob a very wealthy shepherd.
- The Angel of the Lord told Jacob that He was the God of Bethel and to return home with his family.
- Laban caught up with Jacob, and they parted peacefully.

JACOB RETURNS HOME

Genesis 32-35



The twenty years with Uncle Laban were finally over, and Jacob's home and his future now lay before him. God encouraged Jacob by letting him see a company of angels. Jacob would not be alone on his journey home.

Jacob sent one of his servants to tell Esau that he was coming home. Esau was now the leader of a people who were to become a powerful nation called Edom. They lived around Mount Seir on the edge of the desert not far from where Isaac lived at Mamre. A messenger from Esau reported that Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men. This frightened Jacob so he divided his people, flocks, and herds into two parts so that one part could escape if Esau came to fight. He, also, sent five shepherds with five hundred and eighty

animals as gifts to Esau.

Jacob turned to God in prayer asking for help. He was camped near the brook Jabbok. During the night, he sent his family across the brook while he stayed behind alone. Suddenly, the Angel of the Lord appeared and made Jacob fight by wrestling with him. He crippled Jacob by shrinking a muscle in his leg. Jacob realized that this was the Angel of the Lord. The Angel of the Lord told Jacob to let Him go because dawn was breaking. Jacob hung on to Him and said that he would not let go until he received a blessing. The Angel of the Lord asked Jacob what his name was. When he said that it was Jacob, the Angel of the Lord said that it would now be "Israel" meaning "Prince of God," because as a prince he had prayed for God's blessing and received it. In these words the Angel of the Lord was blessing Jacob saying that he had become a new man fit to be the bearer of the Messianic Promise. Jacob named the place Peniel, meaning "I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved."

Jacob limped across the brook and divided his family into three parts, the concubines and their children first, Leah and her children second, and Rachel and her son Joseph last. Jacob saw Esau coming in the distance and went to meet him bowing seven times as Esau came near. Much to Jacob's joy and relief, Esau got off his camel and ran to meet Jacob. He put his arms around Jacob, kissed him, and they both cried. Jacob's family bowed to Esau as they were introduced. Esau asked Jacob why he sent the five shepherds and the animals to him, that he did not need them because he had enough. Jacob asked him to please take them because to see Esau's face in peace was like seeing God's face in love and peace. Esau accepted the gifts and offered to provide an armed escort for Jacob. Jacob said that it was not necessary as he had to move slowly because of his children and the young animals.

Jacob moved toward Mamre first settling in Succoth and later moving to Shechem where he bought some land, dug a well, and built an altar for the worship of the true God. After

about ten years, God spoke to Jacob and told him to go to Bethel, which means, “House of God,” to build an altar there and to worship the God who had appeared to him there as the Angel of the Lord, and had preserved and blessed him through the years. Again God spoke to Jacob saying that his name was now “Israel,” that a nation would come from him.

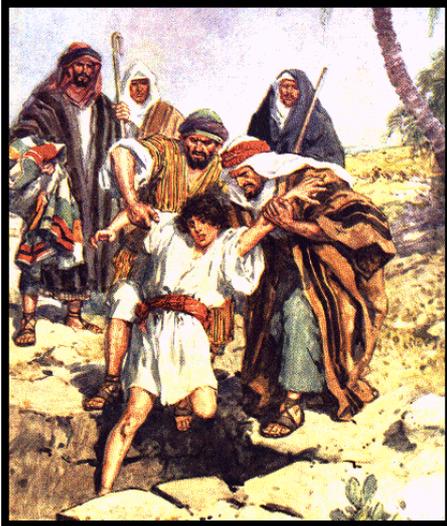
After leaving Bethel, Jacob moved to Bethlehem. There Jacob’s last son, Benjamin, was born to Rachel who died giving birth to him. Jacob buried Rachel there and set up a monument on her grave. From Bethlehem he moved to Mamre where he took over his father’s flocks. He had been gone from home about thirty years. The journey home from Haran had taken about ten years. Isaac was now about 167.

Isaac lived to be 180. When he died, Jacob and Esau buried him in the Cave of Machpelah beside Rebekah. Because of their tremendous wealth in cattle, the land of Canaan could not support them both. Jacob stayed at the family home in Mamre, his descendants becoming the nation of Israel. Esau moved with all that he had to Mt. Seir and founded the nation of Edom, neighbors to Israel.

- Jacob wrestled with the Angel of the Lord, who crippled him, but blessed him and gave him a new name, “Israel.”
- Jacob met Esau in peace.
- Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin and was buried at Bethlehem.
- Jacob returned home having been gone about 30 years.
- Isaac died at the age of 180 and was buried by Jacob and Esau beside Rebekah in the Cave of Machpelah.

JOSEPH

Genesis 37



God's time had come to build Israel, His Messianic Nation. The nation was to have twelve tribes from the twelve sons of Jacob. The nation was not to be built through war, conquest, or wealth. Neither would it be a nation loosely united of individual tribes of wandering shepherds. They were to be one united nation and God said that this would take place in a foreign land. The nation would be isolated by slavery and thus remain pure in race and religion. God had told Abraham that it would take four hundred years of slavery in that land before God would have them return and claim Canaan as their nation's homeland. When they would leave the foreign land, they would take great wealth with them.

Joseph, the son of Jacob's beloved wife, Rachel, was chosen by God to prepare the way for the family to move to Egypt to grow as this nation of Israel in a foreign country.

Joseph was different from his brothers. He was godly, obedient, and respectful while his brothers were a rough and crude lot. Joseph would tell his father what bad things his brothers did. That caused Jacob to scold the brothers turning their feelings toward Joseph to hatred. His father openly loved Joseph more than all his brothers and he had a special robe or coat of many colors, the kind that princes wore, made for Joseph. The brothers finally hated Joseph so much that they could not speak peacefully to him.

One morning Joseph said that he had a dream. While they were cutting and bundling the grain, his bundle of grain stood up straight, and all of their bundles bowed down before his. The brothers were furious and said that they would never bow down to Joseph or be ruled and under Joseph's power.

Joseph had a second dream in which the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed to him. This dream even made Jacob rebuke Joseph saying, "Will your mother and I and your brothers bow down to the ground before you?" However, Jacob thought about the dream, but the brothers hated Joseph still more.

Not long after this, Jacob sent Joseph's brothers to Shechem with their flocks. There Jacob had bought land and had dug a well. Apparently the brothers did not send a report back, so Jacob decided to send Joseph to bring back a report. Joseph was seventeen at this time. The distance to Shechem was about sixty miles, taking about a week. This was a dangerous journey, also, as there were bandits and wild animals, such as lions and bears. When Joseph arrived there, his brothers and the sheep were gone. He was told that his brothers had gone on to Dothan, a distance of about fifteen miles more, at least another day's journey.

Before Joseph came to their camp, his brothers recognized him by his coat of many colors. Their hatred flared and some suggested killing him and throwing his body into a pit, blaming his death on some kind of animal. Reuben, the oldest, advised against killing Joseph, but suggested placing him into a dry well which was nearby. Some wells were deep and built as places to which rain water drained.

When Joseph arrived, they grabbed him, took off his coat, and threw him into the dry well. Reuben was planning on taking Joseph out of the well and sending him home. Reuben left on some business. Soon after, a caravan of Ishmaelites from the area of Mt. Gilead arrived. Judah suggested selling Joseph to the Ishmaelites who were carrying spices and perfume to Egypt where high prices were paid for such items. They dealt in everything, even slavery. The brothers lifted Joseph out of the dry well and sold him for twenty pieces of silver, though the standard price for a slave was thirty pieces of silver. Joseph was chained and taken away to Egypt.

When Reuben returned and found that Joseph had been sold, he was upset for he knew that as the oldest he would be held responsible by his father. The brothers agreed on a plan. They killed a young goat, ripped Joseph's coat, rolled it in the bloody dirt, and sent it back to Jacob.

Jacob was told that they found this coat and asked if it was Joseph's coat? Jacob was heart broken and blamed himself for sending Joseph to check on his brothers. He believed their story that some animal had killed Joseph. The brothers could not comfort their father who mourned for his son. Jacob's sorrow and their guilty consciences gradually changed the brothers into better men who were sorry and loved their father more.

- God chose Joseph to begin the nation of Israel as His Messianic nation in Egypt.
- Jacob openly favored Joseph over his brothers and had a special coat made for him.
- Joseph's two dreams that his brothers, mother, and father bowed down to him, caused his brothers to hate Joseph more.
- When Joseph was sent to check on his brothers and their flocks, his brothers sold him to a caravan going to Egypt to be sold as a slave.
- Jacob believed the report that Joseph had been killed and mourned for him.

JOSEPH IN EGYPT

Genesis 39-41



No doubt the brothers warned the Ishmalites not to continue on the central highway of Canaan, which would take them near where Jacob lived at Mamre. The “Way of the Sea”, the coastal highway, brought them safely to Egypt where they sold their perfumes, spices, and Joseph. God guided Potiphar, an Egyptian official, to go to the slave auction and buy Joseph. Potiphar was apparently in charge of law and order as captain of Pharaoh’s guard and the prison system.

Being only seventeen, Joseph was young and strong. He was accustomed to wealth and position, but now Joseph was only a slave in a strange land. It was no doubt very hard as he, also, had to learn the Egyptian language and customs. His faith and trust in God gave him the strength he needed to do well in all he was told to do. Joseph did not know it, but God was to teach him administration under Potiphar. Potiphar saw how Joseph was blessed in all he did, so he put him in charge of his household, his business, and wealth.

Egyptian women were known for being immoral, and Potiphar’s wife was no exception. She asked Joseph to be her lover. Joseph told her that he could not do that because it would be betraying Potiphar’s trust and it would be a great wickedness against God. Finally, one day she tempted him again and grabbed hold of his robe. Joseph left his robe in her hands and ran out of the house. She became angry, folded up his robe, and called for help. When Potiphar came home, she showed him the robe and accused Joseph.

Though Potiphar was angry, he acted strangely because he did not have Joseph killed, which would have been the normal punishment. Potiphar only had Joseph put into the prison where the king’s prisoners or officials were kept. The warden, seeing how Joseph was blessed, finally turned the prison over to him. Now he was to learn Egyptian law and justice. The years seemed to pass with no future or freedom from prison in sight.

One day, Pharaoh became angry with his butler, who watched over his food and drink, and with his baker, who made the bread, cakes, and other baked goods. Pharaoh had them both put into the king’s prison. One morning as Joseph visited the prisoners, he asked the butler and baker why they looked sad. They replied that they both had a strange dream the same night and that there was nobody to tell them what the dreams meant. Joseph said that interpretations came from God. They should tell him their dreams.

The butler said that there was a grape vine in front of him which had three branches. It budded, bloomed, and grew ripe grapes. He was holding Pharaoh’s cup in his hand, squeezed the grape juice into the cup, and gave it to Pharaoh. Joseph said that the three

branches were three days and then Pharaoh would restore him to his position as butler. Joseph asked the butler to remember him and ask Pharaoh to release him from the prison.

When the baker heard this interpretation, he told his dream. He was on his way to bring Pharaoh three white baskets of baked goods which he was carrying on his head. The birds came and emptied the top basket. Joseph said that the three baskets were three days. In three days Pharaoh would kill him and let the birds eat him as he hung there. What Joseph said would happen, did happen.

Two years passed and Pharaoh had two strange dreams of which he wanted to know the meanings. The butler told Pharaoh about Joseph interpreting his dream. Pharaoh ordered Joseph to be brought to him. When Joseph had shaved and put on presentable clothes, he went before Pharaoh. Pharaoh said that he had been told that Joseph could interpret dreams. Joseph said that this ability came from God, not some power that he possessed.

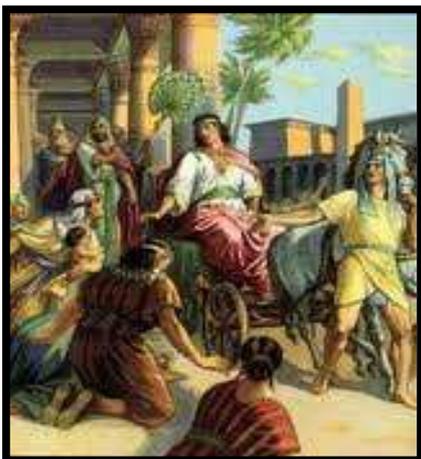
Pharaoh told Joseph his two dreams. In the first dream he was standing by the Nile River when seven good looking cattle came out of the Nile to feed. Suddenly, seven skinny, horrible looking cattle came out of the river and ate up the seven good looking cattle. After eating them, they were still thin. This woke Pharaoh. When he went back to sleep, he saw a stalk of grain having seven large good heads of grain. Suddenly seven dried up, thin, and wind-burned heads of grain came up and ate the large good heads of grain. Joseph told Pharaoh that the two dreams had the same meaning. God was warning Pharaoh of what He was going to do over the next fourteen years. There would be seven years of plenty, shown by the good looking cattle and the large full heads of grain. The seven years of plenty would be followed by seven years of famine, shown by the thin cattle and the wind-burned heads of grain. Joseph said that Pharaoh should set a man over the kingdom to store up grain during the good years. Pharaoh said that since God was with Joseph, he would be the man.

Pharaoh made Joseph the second ruler, had him wear the royal signet ring, dress like a ruler, and use the second royal chariot. He gave Joseph a new name, Zaphnath-Paaneah. He also gave Joseph a wife, Asenath, the daughter of a priest. They had two sons before the famine, Manasseh meaning, "God has made me forget all my toil and my father's house," and Ephraim, meaning, "God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction." It had been thirteen years since he was sold into slavery

- Joseph, purchased by Potiphar, was blessed and became the overseer of all that Potiphar possessed.
- Because Potiphar's wife falsely accused Joseph, he was put in prison and became the overseer of the prison.
- When Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dreams, he was made the 2nd ruler of Egypt.
- Asenath became Joseph's wife and they had two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

JOSEPH MEETS HIS BROTHERS

Genesis 42-46



To prepare for the seven years of plenty, Joseph traveled over Egypt setting up a plan to store the crops. This meant the building of many grainaries. The Bible says that the land produced by handfulls. By the end of the seventh year, there was so much grain stored that Joseph quit keeping record of the stored grain.

After the seventh bountiful crop, the seven years of drought and famine began. All over that part of the world there was a drought. No other nation had stored up grain in the good years. When there were no crops in Egypt, the people cried to Pharaoh for help. They

were told to go to Joseph, who opened the grainaries and began selling grain. As the drought continued, people from all different countries came to Egypt to buy grain.

The drought and famine was, also, in Canaan where Jacob and his family lived. When Jacob heard that grain was being sold in Egypt, he sent ten of his sons to buy grain. He kept the youngest, Benjamin, at home. When the brothers arrived in Egypt, they were taken before Joseph. He remembered his dream as they bowed before him. Although Joseph recognized them, they did not recognize him because he looked like an Egyptian, clean shaven and dressed as a ruler. Joseph accused them of being spies. This frightened the brothers and they began defending themselves by telling Joseph about their father and the family. Joseph demanded that one go home and bring the youngest brother to him, or they would be treated as spies. He then put them in jail for three days. On the third day, Joseph told them that he feared God and was giving them a chance to live. One of them would stay in the jail, the rest could take the grain home to their families. If they wanted to see him again and not die as spies, they had to bring the youngest brother with them.

They began saying to each other that now God was punishing them for selling their brother. Reuben told them that they should have listened to him. Joseph understood them, but they did not know this, since he used an interpreter in speaking to them. What they said brought tears to Joseph's eyes so he had to leave them. When he returned, he had Simeon, one of the cruelest of the brothers, put in chains and sent the other brothers home. He ordered his steward to put every man's money back in his sack of grain.

On the way home, one of them opened his sack to feed his donkeys some grain and found his money. The brothers were afraid, for now they would not only be treated as spies, but thieves as well. They felt that God was judging them. When they got home, they told Jacob what had happened and the demand of the Egyptian ruler that Benjamin must come with them the next time, or they would die. Jacob was upset that they had told the ruler so much. Joseph was gone, Simeon was in prison in Egypt, and now they wanted to take Benjamin. After a while when the grain was gone, Jacob asked his sons to go back to Egypt. Judah, who had become the leader of the brothers, said that they would go if

Benjamin went with them. He said he would bear the blame forever if anything happened to Benjamin. Jacob told them to take Benjamin and to take the ruler special food as a gift and double money.

When the brothers returned to Joseph with Benjamin, Joseph told his steward to take them to his house and prepare a feast for them. This frightened the brothers as they felt they would be made slaves. They went to the steward to explain the matter of the returned money. The steward said that the God of their fathers had given them the money that he had put in their sacks. He brought Simeon to them, gave them hay for their donkeys and water to wash their feet. The steward told them that they were to eat with Joseph. When Joseph arrived, they again bowed before him and gave him their gifts. Joseph asked about their father. When he met Benjamin, he had to leave the room to cry. When he returned, he ordered the food to be brought. The brothers were surprised to be seated by age. Joseph sent food to each one, but five times as much to Benjamin. The brothers showed no jealousy. Joseph ate alone because he was an Egyptian ruler.

Joseph ordered his steward to fill the sacks with grain and to put the double money back into their sacks. In Benjamin's sack, the steward was told to place Joseph's official silver cup. When the brothers had gone a short distance, the steward over took them and accused them of stealing the cup. The steward said he would search the sacks and whoever had the cup in his sack would stay as a slave. When he found the cup in Benjamin's sack, the brothers were totally upset. All of them returned to Joseph.

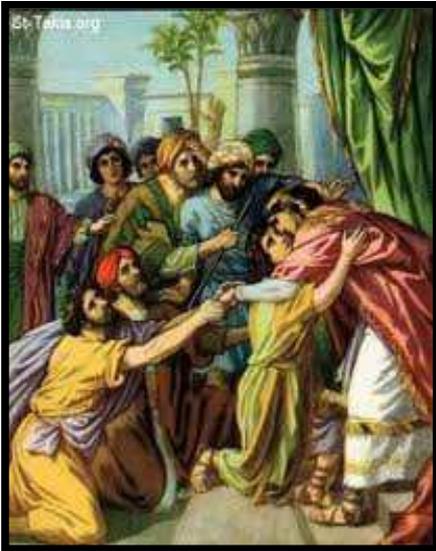
When Joseph asked for an explanation, Judah spoke and said that they were guilty and would stay as slaves. Joseph replied that only Benjamin would stay. Judah came near Joseph and lovingly spoke of his father's love for Rachel's two sons and his father's grief for the one that he felt had been eaten by a wild animal. Now the loss of Benjamin would kill him. Judah said he would stay as a slave in place of Benjamin, that he could not go home without Benjamin and see his father die. This was more than Joseph could bear. He ordered everyone to leave the room but his brothers. He cried out loud and told them that he was Joseph. He said that God had used them to send him to Egypt to prepare a place for them, because there were five years of famine left. All must come to Egypt where he could care for them.

Pharaoh ordered Joseph to send wagons for the families' trip to Egypt. Joseph gave gifts of clothing to the brothers and three hundred pieces of silver to Benjamin in addition to the clothing. Joseph sent twenty donkeys with special gifts to his father. When the brothers got home and told Jacob that Joseph was alive, he said, "Joseph, my son, is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."

- Joseph tested his brothers in several ways. Then Joseph revealed himself to his brothers and sent for Jacob's families to come to Egypt.
- God used Joseph being sold as a slave in Egypt for good, to bring all Jacob's families to Egypt where Joseph could care for them.

JACOB AND HIS FAMILIES IN EGYPT

Genesis 46-50



As Jacob began his journey to Egypt, he went to Beersheba where Abraham and Isaac had dug wells and built an altar to the true God. There God spoke to Jacob in a vision saying that He was the God of Isaac, his father. He should not be afraid for God would be with him and make his family into a great nation in Egypt. After that He would certainly bring them back to Canaan. He, also, said Joseph would close his eyes at his death.

When Joseph in his chariot went to meet his father, they hugged one another and cried. Joseph chose five of his brothers to come before Pharaoh to tell him that they were shepherds. Pharaoh welcomed them and told Joseph to place some of them over his cattle. When Joseph presented his father, Pharaoh

was amazed at how old Jacob looked and asked him how old he was. Jacob replied that he was 130, younger than his fathers, that his years were few, and that in them he had seen much evil. Jacob blessed Pharaoh as he left. Joseph settled his family in the fertile land of Goshen and cared for them.

The people in Egypt and other lands gave their money to buy grain. When the money was gone, Joseph took their livestock, their land, and finally themselves to buy grain. By the end of the famine, Pharaoh owned all the money, livestock, land, and the people. Only the priests were not forced to pay for grain. Joseph then redistributed the population in Egypt and gave them grain to plant as seed for the next year's crop. He made a law that Pharaoh would receive one fifth of their crops every year.

Jacob lived in Egypt seventeen years with his sons and their families under Joseph's watchful eye. It must have been a great joy for Jacob to know Joseph's wife, Asenath, and their sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, who were about 10 and 12 years old.

When Jacob became ill, Joseph took Manasseh and Ephraim to see his father. Jacob told Joseph about God's blessings to him and claimed Joseph's sons as part of his family. The sons were now about 25 and 27 years old. Joseph brought his sons close to Jacob so he could prophetically bless them, guiding Ephraim toward Jacob's left hand and Manasseh toward Jacob's right hand as the first born. But Jacob placed his right hand on Ephraim's head and his left on Manasseh's head. He prayed that the God before whom Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who had sustained him all his life, the Angel of the Lord who had redeemed him from all evil, would bless the sons of Joseph and make them powerful and prosperous tribes. Joseph thought that his father had made a mistake, and had put the wrong hand on his son's heads. Jacob replied that Ephraim would become greater than Manasseh. The names of the sons would be used for a blessing. People would bless a person saying, "God make you as Ephraim and Manasseh." Jacob blessed

Joseph and gave one extra portion to him, more than was given to the other sons of the riches he had taken from the Amorites in battles which are not recorded.

Soon after this, Jacob called all his sons together for their prophetic blessings. The twelve blessings are really pictures of what their tribes would be in the future. Three of these blessings are of special interest and depict special futures. Simeon and Levi, known for their cruelty, were judged for their anger and cruelty. They would be divided and scattered in Israel. Simeon became the southernmost tribe and was eventually absorbed by Judah. Levi did not receive any tribal inheritance, becoming the priestly tribe scattered in priest cities. They owned a little land around their cities for cattle and crops. Six of their cities became cities of refuge. God turned Levi's evil into spiritual service.

Judah received the greatest promise and became the leading tribe of the nation of Israel. He was compared to a lion for strength. Judah's blessing did not rest in its power, but in the person of the Messiah who would come from him and be the promised Savior. The scepter or ruler would never depart from Judah until Shiloh, the divine Prince of Peace, the Savior, would come. (There would always be a Jewish king on the Judean throne until the time of the coming of the Savior. Isaac, years before, had, also, prophesied that Esau would one day reign over Jacob. When the Messiah came, according to these passages, an Edomite was on the Judean throne. This king was Herod the Great, an Edomite.)

Joseph received the assurance that God would bless and keep him. Although he would not be a tribe of Israel, his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, would be two tribes, one taking the place of Levi. Before he died, Jacob charged his sons to bury him in the Cave of Machpelah where Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah were buried, and where Jacob had buried Leah. Having completed the prophecies, Jacob lay back on the bed and soon after died at the age of 147. Joseph closed his eyes and had his father embalmed which took forty days. The nation of Egypt mourned for Jacob seventy days. Pharaoh sent a military escort with Joseph to bury his father in the Cave of Machpelah.

The brothers were afraid that Joseph would turn on them and sent a message to him saying that Jacob had told them to ask for forgiveness. Joseph again told his brothers that they meant it for evil, but God meant it for good to save the lives of many people and to bring Jacob and his families to Egypt.

Before Joseph died, he told the Israelites that God would one day move them back to Canaan. He made them swear to carry his bones to Canaan and bury them there. Joseph lived to be 110 years old and had the pleasure of holding the great grandchildren of Ephraim and the grandchildren of Manasseh on his lap.

- Jacob and his families were settled in Egypt in the fertile land of Goshen.
- Jacob died at the age of 147 and was buried in the Cave of Machpelah.
- Judah received the blessing of being the bearer of the Messianic Promise.
- Joseph lived to be 110 and made the Israelites promise to bury him in Canaan.
- Ephraim and Manasseh became part of the Twelve Tribes.

MOSES, THE DELIVERER, OF ISRAEL

Exodus 1-4



God had told Abraham that his descendants would grow into a powerful nation in a foreign land during four hundred years. The New Testament says that they stayed exactly four hundred and thirty years in Egypt. The years in Egypt were years of peace, prosperity, and growth while Joseph lived. He lived fifty-four years after Jacob died. God's blessings were so great on Israel that the Egyptians became concerned. From seventy souls when Jacob arrived, they increased greatly in numbers. After the death of the Pharaoh that Joseph served, the feeling of the Egyptians for the children of Israel began to change. Finally, a Pharaoh came to power who feared the Israelites' growth and felt that if a war came, the Israelites would join with the enemy against Egypt. He passed a law that all the Israelites were slaves. As slaves, they built Egypt's cities and projects.

Finally, a Pharaoh came to power who made things much worse for the Israelites. He ordered all Israelite baby boys to be thrown into the river to be eaten by crocodiles. The Israelites wanted to leave Egypt and prayed for God to help them.

God heard their prayers and gave a baby boy to a Levite couple, Amram and Jochabed. He was a very special looking baby. They tried to save his life by hiding him for three months in their home. When they could no longer hide him, they made a basket out of reeds, waterproofed it, put the baby in it covering it with a lid, and set it afloat in the Nile River. This part of the Nile was the part where the princess would bathe and there were no crocodiles. The baby had a brother, Aaron, and sister, Miriam. Miriam's mother told her to watch over the baby. When the princess, who seemingly was Hatchepsut, came to bathe in the river, she noticed the little floating basket and sent a maid to get it. When the princess opened it, the baby cried, and she picked him up to comfort him. Miriam ran up and asked if she could get a nurse for the baby. When the princess told her to get one, Miriam got Jochabed, the baby's mother.

There was a custom in the land that if a baby was set adrift on the river, anyone could claim it. The princess claimed the baby and named him, Moses, because she drew him out of the water. The princess hired his mother to care for him until he was weaned. Moses was now safe. As the adopted son of the princess, nobody dared to harm him. Moses grew up as royalty and received the best education.

The New Testament says that Moses was mighty in word and deed. Tradition says that he was the conqueror of Ethiopia. When he was forty years old, he was a proud man and felt that he could become the deliverer of his people, the Israelites, from Egypt. One day he killed an Egyptian taskmaster who was beating a slave. When Moses' deed was

reported, he had to flee for his life to escape from Pharaoh who seems to have been Thutmose the Third. (Thutmose was heir to the throne but was kept from ruling by Hatchepsut until her death. Thutmose then became the Pharaoh. Since he hated Hatchepsut, Moses, her adopted son, dared not stay in Egypt.)

God guided Moses to the home of Jethro, priest of the Midianites. Moses stayed with Jethro for forty years and married Zipporah, his daughter. They had two sons, Gershom meaning “I have been a stranger in a strange land” and Eliezer meaning “The God of my father was my help and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh.” Moses became a desert shepherd learning to know the desert. This was necessary for he was going to lead two million people of Israel through it for the last forty years of his life.

When Moses was eighty, the Angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in a burning bush, but the bush was not burning. Moses went to see it and heard the Angel of the Lord speak, telling him to take off his sandals, because His presence had made the ground holy. The Angel of the Lord told Moses that He was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, making it clear that they were living in His presence. (The Bible here calls the Angel of the Lord, God. The Angel of the Lord was indeed God and Lord, for He was the Second Person of the Trinity, carrying out His Savior role already in the Old Testament days.) The Angel of the Lord said that Moses was to tell Israel that He was the “I Am God, the Ever-living God.” Moses was to go to Egypt to deliver Israel. The Israelites’ prayers had been heard.

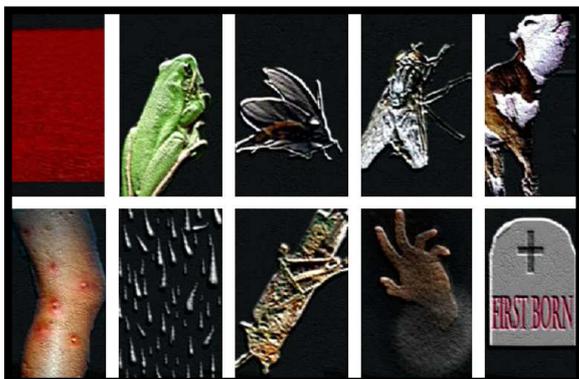
Moses had changed from the proud prince and warrior to a humble shepherd. He said that he could not do it. The Angel of the Lord said that He would be with him and that there would be opposition from the Egyptians until He judged them. Then Israel would leave with the wealth of Egypt. Moses made the excuse that the Israelites would not believe him. The Angel of the Lord enabled him to perform two miracles; one to turn a staff into a snake, and the other to turn his hand into a leper’s hand, then to heal it. Moses still tried to make excuses in not going. The Angel of the Lord told Moses to go and He would send Aaron, his brother, to speak for him. Aaron would speak for Moses, but Moses would speak for God to Aaron.

Aaron came to meet Moses and together they went to Egypt. They spoke to the elders of Israel, who bowed their heads and worshiped, believing that God would deliver them.

- Pharaoh made the Israelites into slaves and commanded the baby boys be thrown to the crocodiles.
- Moses was born to a Levite couple who tried to save his life by placing him in a basket in the Nile River. He was found by the Princess and became her son.
- When Moses killed an Egyptian taskmaster, he had to flee into the desert.
- He became a desert shepherd and married Zipporah, daughter of Jethro.
- The Angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in the burning bush as the “I am God.”
- Moses was told to go to Egypt with his brother, Aaron, to deliver the Israelites.

THE TEN PLAGUES IN EGYPT

Exodus 4-12



God told Moses and Aaron to go to Pharaoh and ask him to let the Israelites leave, but that Pharaoh would demand a sign. When they went to Pharaoh, Moses told Aaron to throw down his staff. When he did, it turned into a serpent. Pharaoh's magicians or sorcerers, also, turned their staffs into serpents, however Moses' serpent ate their serpents. Seeing this, Pharaoh refused to let Israel go.

Moses and Aaron were then sent to meet Pharaoh on the banks of the Nile River where they told Pharaoh that God would cause Pharaoh to know that God was speaking to him. Aaron hit the waters of the river with his staff. It turned to blood and all the fish died. Aaron stretched his staff over the land of Egypt and all the water became blood. Since the magicians did the same, Pharaoh hardened his heart and went home. This plague lasted for seven days, so new wells had to be dug for water to drink.

Again God told Moses to go to Pharaoh and ask for the Israelites to go and serve Him. If he refused, God would bring a plague of frogs on Egypt. The frogs would be everywhere. What made it even worse was that frogs were sacred to one of their gods and it was the death penalty to kill one. The magicians were, also, able to do this, but could not remove them. Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and asked them to ask God to remove the frogs and he would let Israel go to sacrifice to their God. When Pharaoh saw that the frogs had died, he would not let the Israelites go. As the frogs rotted, Egypt stank.

God told Moses to have Aaron stretch out his staff and hit the dust so that the land of Egypt would be filled with tiny gnats or flies. They were hardly visible, but they would bite and cause a great deal of itching. (In America there is a similar gnat, so small that they are called, "No-see-ums" by the Indians.) The magicians could not do this and told Pharaoh that this was the finger of God. Pharaoh did not listen to the magicians and again refused to let Israel go.

After this plague, God told Moses and Aaron to meet Pharaoh early in the morning when he came out to conduct the morning Nile Ceremony. Moses repeated God's demand, "Let My people go." If Pharaoh would not let His people go, then God would send swarms of flies into the land. There would be no flies in the land of Goshen where the Israelites lived. The flies were everywhere and landed on people's eyelids and bit them. The flies laid eggs in the rotting frogs and produced maggots which produced more flies. Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said that he would let Israel worship in Egypt. Moses said that they would go three days journey into the desert. Pharaoh agreed and asked Moses to pray to God for him. Moses prayed that the flies would be gone the next

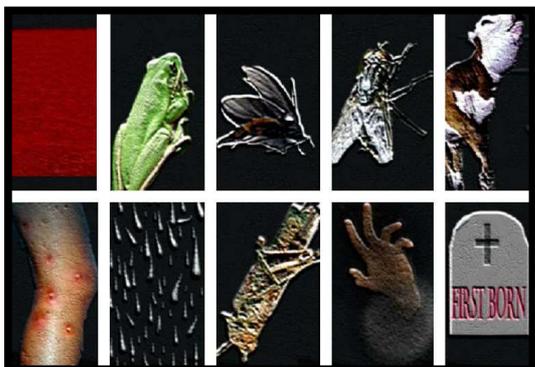
day. God heard Moses' prayer and the next day there were no flies. When Pharaoh saw this, he again hardened his heart and refused to let Israel go.

Once more God sent Moses to Pharaoh with the demand to let Israel go. If he would not, God would send a disease upon all the livestock of Egypt, and all the sheep, goats, cattle, horses, and camels would die. In the land of Goshen, not one would die. But Pharaoh's heart was hardened and he refused to let Israel go.

Again God sent Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh, and as Pharaoh watched, Moses took ashes from the fireplace and tossed them into the air. Immediately, boils broke out on all the Egyptians. God hardened Pharaoh's heart and he would not let Israel go.

Moses and Aaron were again told to go before Pharaoh and demand that he let Israel go. Moses told Pharaoh that now God would make Pharaoh and all Egypt see the greatness of God by sending a terrible storm. All the Egyptians were to get their slaves and livestock out of the field, for any person or animal in the fields would die. Many Egyptians believed Moses and brought their slaves and livestock into shelter. The next day, as God had said, a terrible storm of hail, lightning, and thunder came upon Egypt. All outside were killed. Lightning ran along the ground and hail broke branches and stripped the leaves off every tree. The barley and flax crops were destroyed. So frightening was the storm and thunder that Pharaoh admitted he had sinned and promised to let Israel go. When the storm stopped, Pharaoh and his leaders hardened their hearts and would not let Israel go.

THE TEN PLAGUES continued



God sent Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh again with the same message, “Let My people go.” Moses told Pharaoh that if he refused again, God would send a plague of locusts like nothing in the world’s history. They would eat every green thing in Egypt, cover the ground, and fill the buildings and homes of the Egyptians. Some of the Egyptian leaders told Pharaoh to listen because Egypt had already been destroyed by the God of Moses. The gods of Egypt had been powerless.

Pharaoh said only the men could go and worship and he drove Moses and Aaron out of the court.

God told Moses to stretch his staff over Egypt and God sent the plague of locusts. They covered the ground, the buildings, the houses, the fields and ate every green thing that was left in Egypt. Pharaoh hurriedly called for Moses and Aaron, admitted sinning against God, asked for forgiveness, and asked Moses to pray for God to remove the locusts. God sent a strong wind and blew the locusts into the ocean. When they were gone, God hardened Pharaoh’s heart and he refused to let the Israelites go.

Without warning, God sent the next plague, a plague of darkness so dense that you could feel it touching you. It was terrifying to the Egyptians, causing them to not move for up to three days. The Egyptian’s main god, Amon Ra, who was thought to be the god of the sun and light, was shown to be powerless. In the land of Goshen, there was light for the Israelites. Pharaoh offered to let the Israelites go without their livestock. Moses said that all had to go. Pharaoh became angry and told Moses that if he saw him again, he would kill him. Moses agreed that Pharaoh would never see him again.

Moses then told Pharaoh of the tenth plague, the death of the first born of man and beast. He said that Pharaoh’s leaders would come to him begging him to let the Israelites leave.

To prepare for this plague, the Israelites were to take a perfect year old lamb for each household on the tenth day of the month of Nisan and kill it on the fourteenth day. They were to take its blood and spread it on the doorposts of their houses. The Angel of the Lord would pass over the house and those inside would live, but in every Egyptian home, the first born of all people and livestock would die.

The Israelites did as God commanded and on the fourteenth day, they roasted the lamb whole, ate unleavened bread, and were prepared to march. As God had said, the Angel of the Lord passed over the land and a cry of mourning went up all over Egypt as the first born of man and beast were killed. To remember this plague and their deliverance from Egypt, God established the Feast of the Passover to be observed each year.

When Egypt released the Israelites to follow Moses and Aaron, God told them to ask the Egyptians for clothing, jewelry, and money as payment for the four hundred years of slavery. The Egyptians were so afraid that they gave the Israelites the wealth of Egypt. As God had promised Abraham, they left Egypt a wealthy nation. The year was 1446 B.C. ending four hundred and thirty years in Egypt.

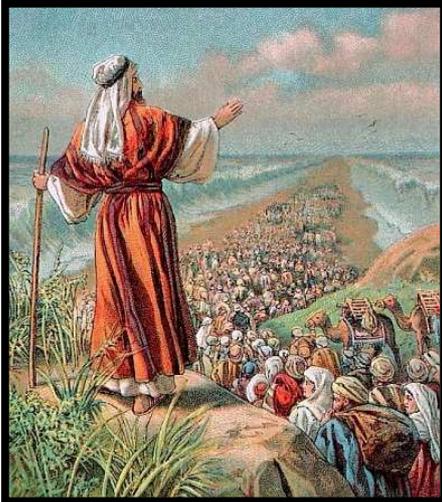
God's promise had come true. Israel was at last set free by Pharaoh, Ahmen Hotep, II, son of Thutmose III. The Israelites were on their way home to Canaan where the Savior was to be born about 1400 years later. They took with them the coffin of Joseph who had made them swear to bury him in Canaan when they returned.

The Angel of the Lord went before them in a Pillar of Cloud. At night He hovered over them in a Pillar of Fire giving them light to show them the way. When the Cloud moved, they moved. When the Cloud stopped, they stopped. For the next forty years the Angel of the Lord never left them. His presence was always visible. They could always see and know that God was with them.

- 1st plague – water changed to blood
- 2nd plague - frogs covered Egypt.
- 3rd plague – gnats covered men and animals.
- 4th plague – flies covered Egypt, except in Goshen.
- 5th plague - Egyptian livestock died. Israelites spared all the following plagues.
- 6th plague – boils covered all the Egyptians.
- 7th plague – frightening storm of thunder and lightening - hail destroyed crops.
- 8th plague – locust covered the land eating everything else that was green.
- 9th plague – darkness covered the land for three days. Goshen had light.
- 10th plague – The Angel of the Lord passed over Egypt killing the first born of man and beast of the Egyptians.
- The Israelites were spared by placing the blood of a lamb on the door frames of their house. The Feast of the Passover was instituted by God.
- God's promise had come true, the Israelites were free, leaving a wealthy nation.
- For forty years the Angel of the Lord in the Pillar of Cloud by day and the Pillar of Fire by night never left them.

ISRAEL LEAVES EGYPT

Exodus 12-19



The Angel of the Lord did not lead them on the highway to Canaan which would have meant immediate war. Instead He led them through the desert of the Red Sea. God had Moses turn south and camp beside the Red Sea.

After the Israelites left, God hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he would try to bring the Israelites back to reestablish their slavery. Pharaoh gathered his chariots and chased after the Israelites. When the Egyptian army became visible, the Israelites panicked and murmured against Moses. It looked like there was no way to escape. Moses told the Israelites to stand still and see God save them and destroy the Egyptian army. In a final judgment and

destruction of Egypt's great military might, God was going to make Egypt harmless to Israel in the future.

The Angel of the Lord in the Pillar of Cloud went behind Israel giving light to the Israelites, but placing darkness over the Egyptians. Moses lifted his staff over the sea and the waters began to divide. All night long God sent a wind that split the sea into two parts with dry land in the middle. The Israelites passed through the sea on dry ground between the walls of water. It must have taken at least a day for about two million people, plus their livestock, to pass over to the other side. As the Israelites moved to safety, the Angel of the Lord let the Egyptians see them crossing on dry ground.

The army hurried to catch up with them. When they were between the walls of water on the dry ground, the Angel of the Lord told Moses to stretch his staff over the sea. He caused the bottom to become soft and the chariots became stuck. Panic reigned in the Egyptian army as the Angel of the Lord brought the sea together and drowned the entire Egyptian army. This caused the Israelites to fear God and believe the words of Moses. Moses led the people in a song of praise to God and his sister, Miriam, led the women with timbrels and dancing.

From the crossing in the Red Sea, Israel traveled through the Desert of Shur where Moses had been a shepherd for forty years. After three days, they came to a place where they could not drink the water because it was bitter. They complained to Moses who prayed for help. God told Moses to throw a certain tree into the water and the water became good to drink. They called the place Marah because of the bitter water.

They traveled from Marah to Elim which was a larger Oasis having twelve wells and seventy palm trees. Here the Israelites complained about not enough food. God sent them manna in the morning for the next forty years. Manna was small and white, like small sleet or snowflakes. It could be eaten plain or cooked, tasting like wafers and

honey. Each person was allowed to gather a homer or two quarts per day. If a person would gather more, it would not keep, but would breed worms and stink. On Saturday, which was to be a day of rest and worship, there would be no manna. Every Friday they were to gather four quarts per person and it would keep. God in this way taught them to observe the Sabbath and to be obedient. The reason it was called manna was because the Israelites asked “manu,” “what is it?” when they first saw it.

Leaving the desert of Shur, they came into the Desert of Sin, and camped at Rephidim. There they found no water, and murmured against Moses. They were ready to stone him. God told Moses to hit a rock and water flowed from the rock. Moses called the place, “Massa or Meribah” because of their murmuring which was actually tempting God.

While at Rephidim, the Amalekite nation came to fight against Israel. They were a robbing nation and kept harming the stragglers of the Israelites as they marched. Moses had Joshua raise an army to fight them. In the morning, Moses with Aaron and Hur stood on a hill overlooking the battle. When Moses raised his arms, Israel began winning. When he let his arms down, they would lose. Aaron and Hur had Moses sit on a stone and they held up Moses’ arms until evening when the battle was won.

Jethro, Moses’s father-in-law, heard where Moses was and came to see him bringing Zipporah, Moses’ wife, and his two sons, Gershom and Eliezer. Jethro was happy that God had blessed Moses and had made him the leader of Israel. Jethro offered a sacrifice and Aaron and the elders came to the sacrificial feast. Jethro watched Moses listen to the problems of the people and told Moses that he should organize the nation into groups, each group having a leader or judge. They would handle the day to day problems, leaving Moses to deal with the major problems. Moses did this with God’s approval.

- The Angel of the Lord divided the Red Sea. The Israelites crossed on dry ground.
- The Angel of the Lord caused the Egyptian army to be drowned in the Red Sea.
- The Israelites murmured – God gave them water and manna.
- They defeated the Amalekites at Rephidim.
- Jethro brought Moses’ wife, Zipporah, and his two sons to him.

GOD GIVES THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AT MT. SINAI

Exodus 19-32



In the third month after leaving Egypt, the Israelites moved to the Desert of Sinai and camped before the mountain which had a large open area with water and pasture land. God called Moses up into the mountain to tell Moses the message He wanted him to say to His people. In words of divine love, God urged His chosen people to faithfully believe and keep the Salvation Covenant or Promise of Eden which pointed them to the coming Salvation Covenant of

Eden in fulfillment.

“You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now if you obey Me fully and keep My Covenant, then out of all nations you will be My treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” Exodus 19:4-6

The people vowed, saying, “All that the Lord has spoken, we will do.” After the people had vowed to be faithful, God told Moses to tell the people that He would come and speak to them. They were to be sanctified and wash their clothes and on the third day God would come down on Mt. Sinai in the sight of all the people. On the third day God's presence could be seen in fire and smoke on the mountain. The mountain shook and an angelic trumpet sounded louder and louder. God spoke the Ten Commandments to the Israelites. The people were so terrified that they moved back from the mountain and told Moses that he should talk to God for them and then tell them God's will. They said that if God continued to speak to them, they would die. Moses told them not to be afraid. They should worship and fear God, and not sin against Him.

Moses went into the thick darkness where God talked to him. God set before Moses the way the nation of Israel was to worship and live before Him. God the Father spoke of how the Angel of the Lord was going to guide them to the Promised Land. They were to obey the Angel of the Lord and not provoke Him, for He would not forgive their sins as He bore the name of God. If they would obey Him, then God the Father would be an enemy to all their enemies, and help them conquer the land. The heathen were to be driven out and no covenant was to be made with them. God told Moses to have Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel to come up to Him to worship.

That night Moses wrote down all that God had said in what was called the, “Book of the Covenant.” Early the next morning, Moses built an altar at the base of the mountain and set up twelve pillars, one for each tribe of Israel. He had some young men offer burnt offerings and peace offerings of oxen to God. Moses read the Book of the Covenant to

the people and they again vowed saying, “All that the Lord has said, we will do and be obedient.” Moses sealed the Covenant of God with the blood of the sacrifice.

After this, Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders went up into the mountain and ate the sacrificial meal in the presence of God. They were able to see God standing on a floor of sapphire stone, clear, and blue as the sky. They returned to camp filled with awe and devotion to God.

Soon after this, God told Moses to come up into the mount to receive His Commandments on tablets of stone. Moses appointed Aaron and Hur to be in charge of the camp, and took Joshua with him. They waited for six days while a cloud covered the mountain. From the camp, it looked like a cloud covered mountain with its top covered by a huge blazing fire. On the seventh day, God called Moses to come to Him. Moses left Joshua and went up into the cloud to be with God staying there for forty days and nights. During this time, God showed Moses how to build the tabernacle. He, also, gave Moses two tablets of stone with the Ten Commandments written on them.

Meanwhile in the Israelite camp, the people grew tired of waiting for Moses. They came to Aaron demanding that he make them a god or an idol. Aaron gave in to their demands and requested their golden earrings. Aaron melted the earrings and used the gold to make a gold covered calf. He proclaimed the next day as a festival to the Lord. Many ate, drank, and celebrated, worshiping their new god like heathen.

God knew what had happened. He told Moses that because of their idolatry, He would wipe out the nation of Israel and make a new nation from Moses. Moses pleaded for the people. God sent Moses to deal with them. When he rejoined Joshua, Joshua said that it sounded like the noise of war. Moses told him that it was not the noise of war, but singing and celebration. When they arrived at the camp, Moses became furious at what he saw. The celebration was like an immoral heathen feast. He threw the two tablets of stone on the ground, smashing them to pieces. He took the golden calf, burned it, ground it to powder, threw it on the water, and made the Israelites drink it. He called for all who were faithful to God to come to him. He then sent some Levites into the camp to execute the leaders of the celebration. Three thousand were killed.

- God spoke to the people and they in fear asked that God speak only to Moses.
- Moses was with God on the mountain for forty days and nights. God wrote the Ten Commandments on two tablets of stone and said how to build the tabernacle.
- The Israelites sinned by demanding that Aaron make a golden calf idol. God’s judgment fell and three thousand were killed.
- Ex. 19:4-6 and Deut. 7:6,7, foretell the fulfillment of God’s Promise of the coming Savior in His Covenant of Gen. 3:15, who by promise were and by fulfillment would be the people of God in Christ. Peter pointed to this fulfillment in 1 Peter 2:9,10. In Christ’s atonement, the Old Testament Covenant of Eden was fulfilled for all people of all time including the Gentiles. This was the message of God to all who would believe in the Savior and be found faithful to the end of time.

ISRAEL AT MOUNT SINAI

Exodus 33



Moses prayed that if God the Father would not forgive the people, to take his life instead. God said that the sin would be borne by those who had sinned. Moses pitched the worship tent away from the camp so that all who were faithful could go to it to worship and seek God's pardon and blessing. The people watched as Moses would come to the entrance. The Pillar of Cloud would move down to the entrance and the Angel of the Lord would talk to Moses face to face.

God told Moses that the Angel of the Lord would lead the people to the Promised Land of Canaan. God the Father refused to go with them because they were a stubborn and perverse people. He said that He would surely destroy them. Moses asked God who would guide Israel if He would not. God said that "His Presence, His Face" would go with them, thus showing that the Angel of the Lord was divine, God Himself.

Moses then asked to see God's glory, but God told Moses that no man could see that and live. However, He would show him what he could stand. God told Moses to prepare two stone tablets to replace the ones he had broken. The next morning Moses took them up the mountain to God who then placed Moses in a crevice of a rock so Moses could see a part of God's glory as God passed by. Moses was there another forty days and nights. God rewrote the Ten Commandments on the tablets of stone which He had Moses bring.

When Moses returned, his face glowed. It frightened the people so much that Moses wore a veil when he spoke to them. When he spoke to God, he took the veil off. As time passed by, the glowing disappeared.

After Moses came back from his second stay of forty days and nights with God, he set before the Israelites the task of building the tabernacle. As they worked, God blessed them and the entire nation joined together in supporting it with the materials that were needed. When it was finished, the Pillar of Cloud covered it and God's Cloud of Glory, the Shekiah filled it. Even Moses could not enter it. From that time on, and for the rest of the forty years in the desert, the Pillar of Cloud continued to hover over the tabernacle by day and night. When the Cloud moved, the nation moved by day or night. When it stayed still over the tabernacle, the nation rested in that place.

The Israelites stayed at Mt. Sinai for about two years. During this time, Moses instructed and organized them, even as to where the tribes were to pitch their tents and the order in which they were to march. The tribes were divided into four groups, three tribes to a group, Judah, the Messianic tribe, and two others camped and marched in the leading position on the East side of the camp. On the North, South, and West sides were groups of three tribes each. Each tribe had a standard or type of flag which showed their people

where to camp or to march. In the middle of the tribes, was the tabernacle with the Ark of the Covenant, Moses, Aaron, and the tribe of Levi.

When the camp was at rest, Moses would go to the tabernacle and talk to God who spoke to him from the mercy seat which was between the golden cherubims on the top of the Ark of the Covenant. When the Pillar of Cloud lifted, Moses would say, "Rise up, O Lord! May your enemies be scattered; may your foes flee before you." Whenever it came to rest, he said, "Return, O Lord, to the countless thousands of Israel."

- God said His "Presence or Face," the Angel of the Lord, would guide them.
- Moses spent another forty days and nights with God on the mountain where God rewrote the Ten Commandments on two tablets of stone and further instructed Moses on how the Israelites were to worship Him.
- God showed Moses a part of His glory. When Moses returned to camp, his face glowed so he wore a veil when he spoke to the Israelites. In time it faded.
- Moses then instructed the Israelites on how to worship and serve God with sacrifices, how and where to camp, and in what formation to march.
- The tabernacle was built and God's Cloud of Glory, the Shekinah, filled it.
- The Pillar of Cloud stayed over the tabernacle by day and night. When the Pillar of Cloud moved, the Israelites journeyed on. When it stopped, they camped.

ISRAEL LEAVES MT. SINAI

Numbers 9-14

Shammua	Tribe of Reuben
Shaphat	Tribe of Simeon
Caleb	Tribe of Judah
Igal	Tribe of Issachar
Joshua	Tribe of Ephraim
Palti	Tribe of Benjamin
Gaddiel	Tribe of Zebulun
Gaddi	Tribe of Manasseh
Ammiel	Tribe of Dan
Sethur	Tribe of Asher
Nahbi	Tribe of Naphtali
Geuel	Tribe of Gad

After the teaching and organizing of the people was finished, the Pillar of Cloud lifted up and led Israel on a three day's journey. After that short time, the people started murmuring and complaining. God became angry and caused some to die in the camp. Moses prayed for them, and God stopped punishing the people.

Soon after, they again began to murmur, this time over their food, claiming they did not have enough meat to eat. They said that in Egypt they had fish and fresh vegetables, but now they only had manna.

God told the people through Moses that they were going to have meat to eat an entire month until they were sick of it. God caused a wind to bring in large flocks of quail. There were so many that they piled up three feet deep all around the camp for about five to ten miles. The people were so greedy that all that day, all night, and the next day, they gathered the quail, eating them and spreading them out on the ground to dry in the sun. The smallest amount they gathered for a family was about twenty bushels. While the meat was between their teeth, God killed many for their greed and gluttony.

Moses' wife, Zipporah, had evidently died and Moses married an Ethiopian woman, not an Israelite. Miriam and Aaron were upset. When they claimed to be equal to Moses, God spoke to all three and told them to come before the tabernacle. The Angel of the Lord in the Pillar of Cloud came down to the entrance of the tabernacle and told them that He would speak to prophets in visions and dreams, but He would speak to Moses face to face. The Angel of the Lord asked Miriam and Aaron why they were not afraid to speak against Moses. As the Cloud of the Angel of the Lord rose up from the tabernacle, Miriam and Aaron were terrified because Miriam was now a leper.

Aaron begged Moses to forgive them for their foolish actions and pleaded for Moses to take Miriam's leprosy away. Moses begged the Angel of the Lord to heal Miriam. The Angel of the Lord said that Miriam was to be exiled from the camp for seven days. After this she could join the camp again and was healed.

The camp moved to the desert of Paran on the border of the land of Canaan. Here God ordered Moses to pick twelve men, leaders of their tribes to go into the land of Canaan for forty days as spies to study it, noting its strengths, weaknesses, and fertility. They returned with huge clusters of grapes and said that it was indeed a rich land. But ten of them said that the people in Canaan were too powerful, that they would surely be defeated and killed. The Israelites were upset and discouraged. They felt it would be better to return to Egypt and to choose a new leader.

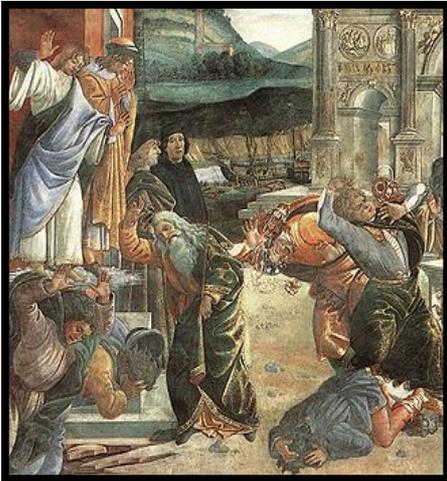
Moses and Aaron fell to their faces on the ground in utter dismay. Two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, pleaded with the people to go with God, but the people wanted to stone them. When this was said, the glory of the Angel of the Lord flashed from the Pillar of Cloud. He said that He would wipe out the nation and build a better one from Moses. Moses pleaded with God to forgive and not destroy the nation of Israel. The Angel of the Lord forgave them, but all of the people twenty years old and older would die in the desert. Only their children, Joshua, and Caleb would come into the Promised Land of Canaan. The Israelites were to wander in the desert a total of forty years, a year for each of the forty days of spying out the land. The Angel of the Lord killed the ten spies who gave the bad report.

The next morning some of the people armed themselves to go into the land of Canaan to take it. Moses said that God would not bless them, but they went anyway and were badly defeated by the Amalekites and Cananites

- The people complained wanting meat. God sent quail to eat.
- The Israelites continually complained, and God would judge and punish them.
- God was displeased when Aaron and Miriam claimed to be equal to Moses. Miriam became a leper, was sent out of camp for seven days, then was healed.
- 12 spies were sent into the land of Canaan. Only Caleb and Joshua gave a good report. The nation rejected their report and rebelled against Moses and God.
- As a judgment, Israel was to wander in the wilderness a total of 40 years.
- All 20 years of age and older would die. Only their children, Caleb, and Joshua would enter the Promised Land.

THE YEARS OF WANDERING

Numbers 16 - 21



Again a rebellion arose against Moses and Aaron. Korah, a priest, Dathan and Abiram, and two hundred and fifty men from the tribe of Levi claimed that Moses and Aaron were taking on too much authority. The Israelites were, also, God's holy people, therefore they were equal to Moses and Aaron. Moses told these men to come to the tabernacle and bring their incense burning bowls or censers. The next day the two hundred and fifty men brought their censers, but Dathan and Abiram did not come.

Moses went to their tents and told everyone to move away. He said that if Dathan and Abiram died by falling down, God was not with him. If the earth suddenly opened up underneath their tents, then God was with him. When he said this, the ground suddenly opened up, swallowed them and all that they had, and closed up again. The people ran away in fear. The Angel of the Lord's glory flashed at the tabernacle and divine fire killed the two hundred and fifty men with their censers. God told Moses to have Eliezer, the priest, use the censers to make a cover for the altar so that nobody would do such a thing again.

The next day the Israelites gathered before Moses and Aaron and accused them of killing God's people. Moses looked toward the tabernacle. The Cloud, the Angel of the Lord's glory, was flashing. Moses told Aaron to hurry and make an offering to God because the people were beginning to drop over dead. Aaron, quickly ran with his censer and standing between the dead and the living, made an offering to God. The Angel of the Lord stopped His judgment but 14,700 were dead.

God then told Moses to tell the tribes to bring a rod or staff from each tribe and set it before God over night in the tabernacle. God would show who the High Priest was. The next day, Aaron's rod had branches, leaves, and almonds on it. No one was to question the position of Aaron again.

After this, the Pillar of Cloud lifted and led the Israelites to Kadesh Barnea where the people began murmuring again because there was no water. Moses and Aaron went to the tabernacle and lay with their faces to the ground pleading for help. God told Moses to speak to a certain rock, and water would come out. They went to the rock, but Moses was so angry that instead of speaking to the rock, he hit it twice with his rod. God gave the water, but because of Moses' disobedience, God said Moses and Aaron would not enter the Promised Land. While they were camped there, Miriam died and was buried.

Moses sent a message to the king of Edom asking for permission to pass through his country and they would pay for any water for their needs. The Edomites, descended from Esau, refused and came with an army to stop them.

The Pillar of Cloud then led Israel around Edom to Mt. Hor. There God told Moses and Aaron that it was time for Aaron to die. Moses, Aaron, and his son, Eleazer, went up the mountain to the place God had chosen. Moses took off Aaron's high priestly robe and put it on Eleazer. God then caused Aaron to die. Moses and Eleazar buried him there.

The Canaanites of that area attacked Israel and took some prisoners. When the Israelites turned to God, He heard their prayer and gave them a great victory. God named the place Hormah, meaning "Beginning place of utter destruction."

The journey around the country of Edom was very difficult and the Israelites again began murmuring and speaking against God and Moses. The Angel of the Lord sent a plague of poisonous snakes. The Bible calls them "fiery serpents" because they were a reddish-orange color or because of the fiery pain from their bite. Many people were bitten and died. The people came to Moses confessing their sin and pleading for help. The Angel of the Lord told Moses to form a serpent of brass, put it on a pole, and tell the people to look to the pole with the brass serpent, and they would live. It must have been an awesome sight to see the terrified and bitten people in the camp covering ten to fifteen miles looking toward the pole with the brass serpent. (The brass serpent on the pole was a picture of Jesus on the cross. Whoever believes and looks to Jesus has forgiveness of sins and everlasting life.)

The Pillar of Cloud again lifted and led them to several places around the country of the Moabites who were descended from Lot. Before they could get to the Jordan River, they had to go through an Amorite country where Sihon was king. Moses asked to go through the country, but Sihon refused and came out with his army to fight the Israelites. God gave the Israelites the victory.

The Israelites then defeated Og, king of the northern Amorites. Og, a giant, was probably about eleven feet tall, perhaps one of the tallest men who ever lived. His bed was made of iron and was six feet wide and thirteen feet long. With these victories Israel ruled the East side of the Jordan River.

- Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rebelled against Moses and Aaron.
- Aaron's rod grew branches and bore almonds, showing he was the High Priest.
- Aaron died and was buried at Mt. Hor.
- When the Israelites murmured, the Angel of the Lord sent fiery serpents.
- All who looked to the brass serpent on a pole lived.
- This is symbolic of Christ on the cross. All who look to Him in faith will be saved.

BALAAAM, THE SOOTHSAYER

Numbers 22-25



For forty years the people of Canaan and its surrounding countries had heard stories of the desert journey of the Israelite people. Five nations had been destroyed by them. Now they had come to the borders of Moab. How could they be defeated? The Moabites and Midianites decided to call Balaam to come and curse Israel. Balaam was a sorcerer or soothsayer who dealt with getting the gods to bless or curse someone and to tell the future. Balaam was famous because it was believed that he could get the gods to do what he wanted. These heathen nations were Polytheistic which means that they had many gods. They believed their gods could be persuaded to bless or curse people, animals, or things. The Israelites were Monotheists, worshipping only one true and living God.

Balak, king of the Moabites, sent important government officials with money and promised rewards to get Balaam to come and curse Israel. When the officials arrived at Balaam's home, Balaam said that he would have to ask God whether he should go with them or not. During the night, God spoke to Balaam in a dream and told him not to go because He had blessed the Israelites. The officials were upset when Balaam refused to go with them. Balak sent another group of more important officials to offer Balaam greater honor and wealth. Balaam wanted to go as he wanted the honor and money. God told him to go, but he was to say only what God would tell him to say.

The officials went ahead followed by Balaam's two servants and Balaam riding his donkey. God sent the Angel of the Lord to deal with Balaam. As Balaam was riding along, suddenly the donkey swerved to the side because the donkey saw the Angel of the Lord with drawn sword blocking the path. Balaam was shaken up and he hit the donkey to get her back on the path. A little later they came to a narrow path between the walls of two vineyards. Again the Angel of the Lord with drawn sword blocked the path. The donkey seeing Him suddenly swerved again crushing Balaam's foot against the wall. Balaam hit the donkey again. Once more the Angel of the Lord with drawn sword blocked the path. The donkey simply fell down under Balaam. Balaam was so angry that he again hit the donkey with his staff. The Angel of the Lord then let the donkey speak to Balaam, saying, "What have I done to you that you have hit me these three times?" Balaam said, "Because you have hurt me. I wish I had a sword in my hand. I would kill you." The donkey replied, "Am I not your donkey on which you have always ridden? Have I ever done something like this to you before?" Balaam said, "No."

Then the Angel of the Lord let Balaam see Him standing there with drawn sword. Balaam was so frightened that he fell down flat on his face. The Angel of the Lord said, "Why did you hit your donkey these three times? I opposed you because your way is perverse before Me. The donkey saw Me and turned away from Me these three times.

Unless she had done this, I would have surely killed you and let her live.” Balaam said, “I have sinned because I did not know that You were standing in the path against me. Therefore if it displeases You, I will go back.” The Angel of the Lord said, “Go with the men, but you must speak only what I tell you.”

A humbled and fearful Balaam went on to meet Balak. When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went to meet him. Balak asked Balaam why he had not come with the first messengers. Balaam replied, “I have come to you. The words God puts in my mouth, is what I will speak.” They went to the city where Balak had Balaam attend a sacrificial meal with the princes of Moab.

The next day, Balak took Balaam to a temple of Baal located on a mountain top from where they could see part of the camp of Israel. Balaam told Balak to build seven altars and offer seven bullocks and seven rams. The Angel of the Lord met him and told him what to say. Balaam returned and blessed Israel, saying that he could not curse a people that God had not cursed. He said he hoped his death would be like the death of an Israelite, one declared righteous before God. Balak was angry with the blessing of Israel.

Balak took him to another place where He prepared seven altars on which he again offered seven bullocks and seven rams. Balaam again went aside to speak to the Angel of the Lord. Once more Balaam blessed Israel.

Balak took Balaam to a third place and prepared seven more altars. Balaam again blessed Israel. Balak was angry, clapped his hands together and told Balaam to go home. Balaam again said that he could only speak what God told him. Balaam prophesied that a Star and Scepter would rise out of Israel, pointing to the coming of Jesus. He prophesied the future of the nations in Canaan.

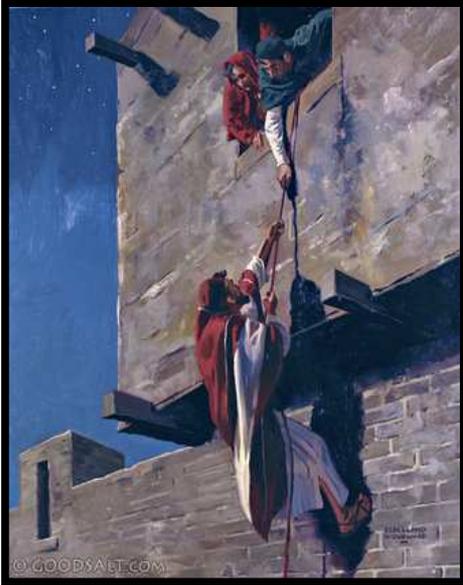
Had Balaam gone straight home, he would have appeared to have been obedient to God, but Balaam taught Balak how to deal with believers so that they would lose God’s blessings and come under His judgment. It was simple. Don’t fight God’s people, because they will turn to God for help. Invite them to share your life style and worship. When the believers live like the unbelievers, God will judge them for their sins. Balak listened to Balaam and had the Moabite and Midianite women invite the Israelite men to come and share their feasts and pleasures. As a result, 24,000 Israelite men died in a plague sent by God. The Midianites were later defeated by Israel and Balaam was killed.

Satan has used this sin of Balaam to try to destroy the believers or Christians of all ages and still does today. God warned His people against the sin of Balaam not only in Moses’ day, but even a thousand years later in the Book of Revelation. Revelation 2. 14

- Balaam, the soothsayer, was brought by Balak to curse Israel.
- The Angel of the Lord blocked the road and made the donkey speak to Balaam.
- The Angel of the Lord forced Balaam to bless Israel.
- Balaam taught the heathen how to destroy God’s people, then and now.

ISRAEL ENTERS THE PROMISED LAND

Deuteronomy 34 Joshua 1,2



God had Moses anoint Joshua to be his successor. Moses wrote down God's Law which was put in the Ark. After Moses had spoken his final message to the nation of Israel, God had him climb Mt. Nebo across from Jericho. God let him see the entire Promised Land with supernatural vision, then God took his life and buried him. The Israelites mourned for thirty days. Moses was unlike any other prophet. He knew and spoke to God face to face.

It must have been an exciting time for the nation of Israel, as it was now time for them to enter the Promised Land of Canaan. God spoke to Joshua to prepare the people. He should not be afraid because God would be with him. Joshua ordered the leaders of the nation to pass through the camp

and tell the people that in three days they would end their forty years of wandering in the desert and make Canaan their home. Joshua spoke to the men of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh who had asked for their possession of land to be on the East side of the Jordan where the kingdoms of Sihon and Og had been defeated. They had offered to send their fighting men ahead of Israel in every battle until the land was conquered and victory won for all the tribes. Now their fighting men were to prepare to cross the Jordan River and lead the army of Israel.

The city of Jericho had to be destroyed as it blocked any entrance into the land. Joshua chose two men to sneak into Jericho to give them a report of the city. The people of Jericho were afraid that Israel was going to attack them and they were watching for spies. It was evening when the two men entered the gate of Jericho. They were noticed and reported to the king. The two men went to an inn owned by a woman named Rahab. The king sent messengers to Rahab that the men were wanted as spies. Knowing the king's men were coming to capture them, Rahab took the two spies up to the flat roof and hid them under stalks of flax which had been laid out to dry. When the king's men arrived, she told them that when it was time to close the gates of the city, the men had left. She did not know where they went, but if they hurried after them, they would catch them.

Rahab went up to the roof and spoke to the spies. She said that since she had showed kindness to them, she was asking for kindness in return. She asked them to swear that they would spare her life and the lives of her family when they took Jericho. The men agreed and told her to tie a scarlet rope in the window and all in her house would be saved. Anyone outside the house would die. Since she lived on the city wall, she let them down the wall through a window with a rope and told them to run to the mountain nearby and hide for three days. After the three days, they reported to Joshua.

Joshua had the Israelites camp on the bank of the Jordan River. Three days were spent in instructing the people, the priests, and in making preparations. The leaders told the people that the signal for them to be ready to march was when the Ark of the Covenant was carried by the priests and the Levites. They were to follow it at a distance of two thousand cubits, about a half mile. Joshua's final orders were for the people to rededicate themselves to God for on the morrow God would do wonders before them.

The Angel of the Lord told Joshua to tell the priests that when they came to the Jordan River, which was at flood stage, they were to walk into the river and stand still holding up the Ark. Joshua told the people that when this happened the water would stop flowing and would build up into a wall. The water below the Ark would drain away down stream and they could pass over on dry ground. The wall of water in back of the Ark would have looked like a great high dam. It backed up the Jordan River fifteen miles to the city of Adam. The crossing probably took about eight hours.

When the people had passed over with their flocks and herds, the Angel of the Lord told Joshua that twelve men, one from each tribe, should take twelve stones from the place where the Ark was in the middle of the Jordan. They were to carry them out of the river to build a lasting monument for the coming generations. Joshua, also, took twelve stones and erected a monument in the place where the priests and the Ark stood in the river as a monument to the crossing.

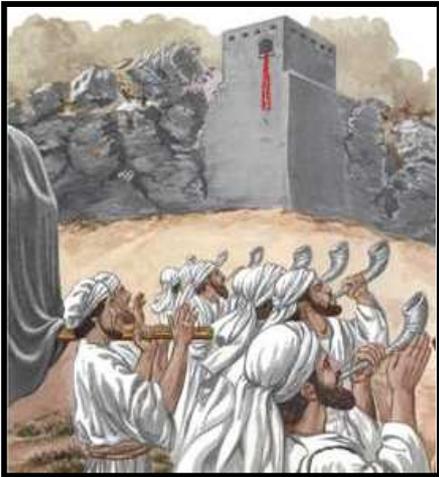
When everything was done, the priests and Levites holding up the Ark were to come up out of the river. As soon as their feet were on high ground, God had the Jordan River flow again. The warriors of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh led the way into the plains of Jericho. When the Israelites camped at Gilgal not far from Jericho, they celebrated the Passover the evening of the fourteenth day of the month of Nisan. The next day they ate unleavened bread and parched corn. After they had eaten of the corn of the land, the manna stopped.

God had fulfilled His promise to bring them to the Promised Land.

- Moses anointed Joshua as the leader of Israel.
- Moses viewed the Promised Land from Mt. Nebo before God took his life and buried him
- The spies that Joshua sent into Jericho were protected by Rahab.
- The Israelites followed the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant. They crossed the Jordan River on dry ground with the water of the river piled up like a wall.
- Israel now ate food from the land. The manna stopped.
- God's promise to bring them back to the Promised Land was fulfilled.

THE FALL OF JERICHO

Joshua 1-24



While the nation of Israel camped near Jericho, Joshua went to look over the city walls to plan Israel's attack. He looked ahead and saw a man standing with a drawn sword. Joshua asked Him whether He was a friend or a foe. The man answered, "As the Captain of the army of God, I am come to you." It was the Angel of the Lord. Joshua fell on his face in worship and said, "What does my Lord have to say to His servant?" The Angel of the Lord repeated what He had said to Moses at the Burning Bush. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy."

The Lord told Joshua how he was to take Jericho. For six days, seven priests were to carry the Ark before the army of Israel led by seven other priests with trumpets of ram's horns. The priests were to blow the horns, but the army was to be silent. On the seventh day they were to go around the city seven times and then stop and blow a long loud blast. The army was to shout with a loud voice and the walls of Jericho would fall flat. The soldiers were to charge straight into the city, totally destroy it, leaving only the gold, silver, brass, and iron for the treasury of the tabernacle. Nobody was to take anything for themselves. Jericho was to be a cursed place. Only Rahab and her family were to be spared according to the agreement with the spies. (Rahab became a member of the tribe of Judah and also one of the ancestors of Christ.)

Joshua did as he was told and Jericho was taken and burned. Joshua cursed it saying that the man who would rebuild Jericho would be cursed before God. When he would lay the foundations of the new Jericho, his oldest son would die. When he would complete the new Jericho by setting up the gate, his youngest son would die. (This came true about five hundred years later in the reign of King Ahab. A man named Hiel was given the task of rebuilding Jericho as a fortified city. When he laid the foundation, his oldest son died and when he completed it by setting up the gate, his youngest son died.)

After taking Jericho, the next place that needed to be taken were two small cities, Ai and Bethel. Some men of the army, who were sent to study it, said that only three thousand men were needed to take it. Joshua sent three thousand men, but they were defeated. Joshua and the elders were upset and lay on the ground before the Angel of the Lord with dust on their heads as a mark of shame and grief. The Angel of the Lord told Joshua to get up, that one of the soldiers had sinned and disobeyed God.

Joshua had the tribes come before him, tribe by tribe. God chose the tribe and finally the person. Achan, from the tribe of Judah, was the guilty one. He confessed his sin and said that he had taken a costly Babylonian robe, two hundred shekels of silver, about two pounds, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, about two pounds and had buried

them under the floor of his tent. His family knew of this disobedience. Achan, his family, and livestock were stoned to death and burned with his possessions.

God told Joshua to take the entire army against Ai. Joshua sent thirty thousand men to be an ambush behind Ai. In the morning, he sent five thousand between Ai and Bethel and he with the rest of his army lured the army of Ai out of the city. Pretending to be defeated, the Israelites ran before them. After running a little ways, Joshua turned and raised his spear as a signal to those in ambush. Both Bethel and Ai had sent their soldiers to chase the fleeing Israelites. The Israelites in ambush took the cities and set them on fire. The Israelites stopped running and fought. God had Israel destroy the people, but let them keep the livestock and whatever there was of value. Now Israel controlled the center of the land of Canaan, and each tribe was to conquer the remaining heathen cities.

The Israelites, however, got tired of fighting and began to tax the heathen or make treaties with them. This God had strictly forbidden. Joshua called a meeting of all the tribes and leaders. He told them that if they did not obey God, God would not let them drive out the heathen. They would remain in the land as a constant trial of faith.

As Joshua had warned, the nation of Israel came under God's judgment. Judges 2:1-10 gives us an account in the time of Joshua to an event that took place. At Bochim the Angel of the Lord appeared visibly before the assembled tribes of Israel. He told Israel that He had brought them out of Egypt to the land of Canaan and that He had been faithful to His word and promises. But because they had been unfaithful and disobedient and did not drive out the heathen, they would no longer be able to drive the heathen out of their land. The heathen would remain as a never ending trial to their faith. After hearing this divine judgment, the people cried and offered sacrifices. The place came to be called Bochim, meaning "weeping"

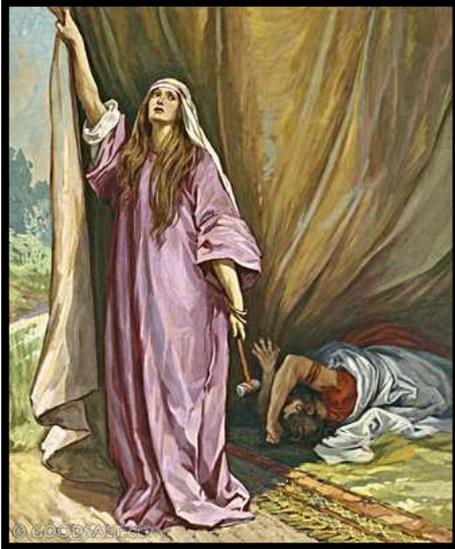
Joshua's most famous words to Israel were, "If it seems bad to serve God, then choose this day who you will serve, the gods of those who lived before the flood, the gods of Egypt or the gods of the Amorites. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Hearing this, Israel vowed to serve God alone.

Not long after this, Joshua died at the age of 110.

- The Angel of the Lord told Joshua how to take the city of Jericho.
- God had the walls fall down after the priests and army marched around it.
- Rahab's family was spared. Rahab, a Gentile, became an ancestor of Christ.
- The Angel of the Lord appeared to the Israelites at Bochim and judged them for their unfaithfulness.
- Joshua died at the age of 110 and was buried on the mountain of Ephraim.

THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES

Judges 1-6



After the death of Joshua, there was no national leader. Israel was a Theocracy, a nation ruled by God, but the people of Israel left God. During the next three hundred and fifty years, they became unfaithful and God turned them over to their enemies. The heathen conquered them, mistreated them, and made their lives miserable. When this happened, God's people would repent and ask God to send a deliverer or a judge to save them from their enemies. As long as the judge lived, the people were faithful to God. When the judge died, the people went back to idolatry. This is called the Period of the Judges.

The first deliverer or judge was Othniel, the nephew of Caleb. God had the king of Mesopotamia conquer Israel and oppress them for eight years. When Israel repented and prayed for help, God had Othniel lead a rebellion against the heathen king and enabled him to save Israel. A period of peace lasting forty years followed.

When Othniel died, Israel again began to go away from God. God let Eglon, king of Moab, defeat Israel, and oppress them for eighteen years. When Israel repented and prayed for help, God sent Ehud to be their judge. He killed King Eglon and led Israel to victory over the Moabites. A period of peace lasted for eight years. After Ehud died, Israel again began to move away from God.

In the north, God let Jabin, the king of Hazor in the area of Syria, defeat Israel and rule over Israel for twenty years. He had an army of nine hundred iron chariots led by Sisera, his much feared general. Israel again repented and prayed for help. God had Deborah, a prophetess, who judged Israel, call Barak from the tribe of Naphtali to save Israel. Barak refused to fight unless Deborah was present in the Israelite camp. Deborah told Barak that the honor of killing Sisera would be given to a woman, not to him. In the battle that followed, God sent a flash flood which made the heavy iron chariots difficult to drive. Sisera left his chariot and fled to the home of Heber. Jael, Heber's wife, gave shelter to the fleeing Sisera, but while he was sleeping, she took a tent peg and drove it through Sisera's head. So it was Jael, a woman, who gained the honor of killing Sisera, not Barak. A peace of forty years followed.

In the south, God saved Israel from the Philistines through Shamgar, a judge. Again the younger generation tried to be like the heathen and turned away from God to idolatry. God turned the Israelites over to the Midianites and Amalekites for seven years. At harvest time, they would sweep into the land like grasshoppers, drive the Israelites away, and reap the harvest. The Israelites repented and prayed for help again.

The Angel of the Lord had been with Israel through the years after leaving Egypt. Now He again appeared to Gideon as he was threshing wheat in the town wine press so the Midianites would not see him. Looking up, he saw the Angel of the Lord as a man sitting under an oak tree watching him. The Angel of the Lord greeted him and assured him that God was with him. Gideon responded by asking why such terrible days had come upon Israel. He asked, “Where are all the miracles which our fathers told us about; how God brought us up out of Egypt? God has forsaken us and given us to the Midianites.”

The Angel of the Lord said, “Go and save your people from the Midianites. Haven’t I sent you?” Gideon made the excuse that his family was poor and he was the youngest in the family. The Angel of the Lord told Gideon that He would be with him and help him to defeat the Midianites. Gideon asked the Angel of the Lord to remain, to give him a sign, and to receive an offering from him. The Angel of the Lord said that He would wait.

Gideon went to his home, killed and cooked a young goat, prepared some small unleavened cakes, put the meat in the basket, and put the broth from the cooked meat in a pot. The Angel of the Lord told Gideon to place the cakes and meat on a rock and to pour the broth over them. When the Angel of the Lord touched the offering with His staff, fire shot out of the rock and consumed the entire sacrifice. The Angel of the Lord vanished. Gideon thought that he would die, because he had seen the Angel of the Lord face to face. The Lord spoke to him and said, “Peace be unto you, you will not die.”

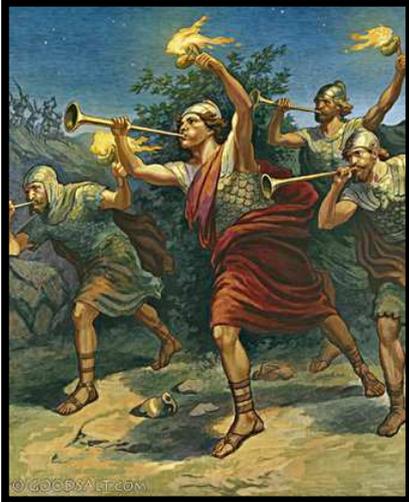
That night the Lord told Gideon to destroy the altar of the idol Baal and the Asherah poles which were in the town. He was to build an altar to Jehovah, the God of Israel, on the top of the rock on which he had offered his sacrifice. There he was to sacrifice his father’s seven year old bull using the Asherah poles to burn it. Ten servants helped him.

The next morning, the town was upset because Baal’s altar was destroyed, and an altar to Jehovah had been built on which a sacrifice had been made. They wanted to kill Gideon, but Gideon’s father said that Baal should plead for himself. If anyone worshiped Baal, that person should be killed.

- The period of the Judges began after the death of Joshua.
- Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Barak, and Shamgar delivered Israel from their enemies.
- The Angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon and told him to deliver Israel from the Midianites.
- The Angel of the Lord touched the offering given by Gideon with His staff, consumed the sacrifice with fire, and vanished from sight.
- Gideon thought he would die because he had seen the Angel of the Lord.

GIDEON DEFEATS THE MIDIANITES

Judges 6-12



Gideon undoubtedly told the people of the coming of the Angel of the Lord and His command. The people accepted and believed what he said and gathered to Gideon in support. When the Midianites and Amalekites crossed the Jordan and camped together in the Valley of Jezreel, Gideon sent messengers to the tribes of Manasseh, Asher, and Zebulun asking them to join in fighting the Midianites and Amalekites.

Gideon again asked God for a sign that this was God's will. He put a sheep's skin outside overnight asking that the fleece should be wet with dew and the ground dry. The next day he asked God to make the fleece dry and the ground wet with dew. God granted his requests for these two signs.

Gideon then moved closer to the Midianite camp with his thirty two thousand men. The Midianites and Amalekites had one hundred and thirty-five thousand men, yet God told Gideon that his army was too large. First, God had Gideon send home all who were afraid. Twenty two thousand left, leaving only ten thousand. God said that it was still too many. He told Gideon to have them march along a stream and to stop and drink from it as though they were in battle. Nine thousand seven hundred knelt down to take a drink, but three hundred cupped water into their hands and lapped it up like a dog. God told Gideon that with these three hundred he would defeat the Midianites and the Amalekites. God wanted Israel to understand that He was giving them the victory. Gideon had the rest of his army remain in camp while he and the three hundred prepared for the battle.

After dark, God told Gideon to go down to the camp of the enemy with his servant and listen to the enemy soldiers. They heard one soldier tell another one of a strange dream he had. A little barley cake came rolling down the hill, landed on a tent, and smashed it. The other soldier said that this meant God was going to let Gideon defeat them.

Encouraged, Gideon returned to his men, divided them into three groups of one hundred, and gave each man a trumpet and an empty clay jug with a burning torch inside. Gideon told them that when he blew his trumpet, broke his jug, and waved his torch into a flame, they were to do the same and shout, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." Then they were to stand still. When they did this, God created a panic among the sleeping Midianites and Amalekites. They fought each other and fled in fear with Gideon and his men pursuing them. Those left at camp joined in the pursuit. Gideon, also, sent messengers to the tribe of Ephraim to block the crossing of the Jordan.

Gideon and his men in pursuit of the fleeing Midianites and the remaining kings, Zeba and Zalmunah, came to the Israelite town of Succoth and asked for food and drink. The leaders refused. Gideon told them that when he returned, he would beat the leaders of the

city with briars and thorns of the desert. Gideon went on to Penuel and again asked for help, but they refused, also. He said that when he returned, he would destroy their tower which was the main defense of the city.

When the fleeing Midianites were defeated, there were only fifteen thousand men left out of one hundred thirty five thousand. Gideon returned to Succoth and Penuel with the kings, Zeba and Zalmunah, as prisoners. At Succoth, he beat the seventy seven leaders with desert thorns and briars. At Penuel, he destroyed the tower and killed its men. Then Gideon killed Zeba and Zalmunah because they had killed his brothers.

The Israelites wanted Gideon to be their king, but Gideon refused, saying that God would rule over them. Gideon served as a judge for forty years and died at a good old age. After his death, Israel went back to idolatry. A son, Abimelech, whose mother was a concubine, had himself appointed king and killed all of Gideon's seventy sons except one named Jotham. Abimelech was evil and died in battle three years later.

After Abimelech, Tola judged Israel for twenty three years. He was followed by Jair who judged on the East side of the Jordan for twenty two years. Eli, the high priest of Israel, served as the judge in Shiloh.

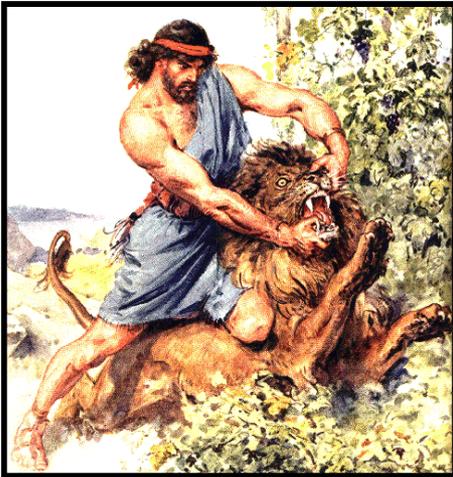
Idolatry again spread over Israel. God turned them over to the Ammonites. When the Israelites acknowledged their sins and prayed to God for help. Jephthah, a tremendous warrior, judged Israel for six years and delivered them from the Ammonites.

It seems that Israel had three judges at the same general time after the death of Jephthah. The tribe of Judah chose Ibzon, who judged the southern area. The tribe of Ephraim chose Abdon, who judged the north central area. The tribe of Zebedee chose Elon, who judged the northern area. No judges were chosen after their deaths, which took place in a space of about five years. Now Israel was badly divided and the people turned again to idol worship. God turned them over to the Philistines.

- Gideon defeated the Midianites and Amalekites and judged Israel for forty years.
- Gideon's son, Abimelech, was evil and claimed to be king for three years.
- Tola judged Israel for twenty years, followed by Jair and Eli.
- Jephthah delivered Israel from the Ammonites and judged Israel for six years.
- Israel had three judges at the same time, Ibzon, Abdon, and Elon.
- Israel turned again to idol worship and God turned them over to the Philistines.

SAMSON, ISRAEL'S DELIVERER

Judges 10-14



God now chose Samson, a one man army, to deliver Israel. Manoah, a farmer whose wife had no children, were to be his parents. One day the Angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah's wife and told her that she was going to have a special son who would be a Nazarite and would begin to deliver the Israelites from the Philistines. (A Nazarite was one who could never drink any wine or strong drink, eat any unclean food, and his hair was never to be cut. Even Samson's mother was not to drink wine or eat any unclean food before his birth). Manoah's wife told her husband about the awesome Messenger. Manoah asked God to send the Heavenly Messenger again so he and his wife

would know how to raise the child.

His prayer was answered, and the Angel of the Lord came again. He repeated the instructions that He had given Manoah's wife. Manoah asked to prepare a meal for the Angel of the Lord. He told Manoah that he could prepare a burnt offering to God. Manoah asked his name, and the Angel of the Lord responded, "Why do you ask for My name, seeing that it is Wonderful?" Manoah and his wife prepared the offering and placed it on a rock as an altar. When they did this, flames devoured the sacrifice, and the Angel of the Lord ascended in the flame. When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell down to the ground on their faces. They realized that the Messenger was the Angel of the Lord. Manoah was struck with fear and said that they would die, because they had seen God. In response, his wife pointed to the announcement of the Angel of the Lord, His acceptance of the sacrifice, and the wondrous task their son was going to undertake.

As the Angel of the Lord had said, they had a son and named him Samson. He was blessed by God and his fearful strength became widely known. God used Samson in a strange way. He was drawn to the Philistine people and their territory, so that he would become an enemy of the Philistines.

On a visit to Timnath, a Philistine town, he met a young woman whom he desired to have as his wife. He asked his father to arrange a marriage with her parents. Manoah objected as the Israelites were not to intermarry with the heathen. At Samson's insistence, arrangements were made to meet the young woman's parents. The parents went ahead of Samson. As Samson came through the vineyards of Timnath, Samson killed a young lion that attacked him. With his great strength he simply tore it apart and let the carcass lie. He said nothing about this to his parents when he joined them to arrange the marriage.

When the wedding day arrived, Samson's parents again went ahead to take their part in the wedding. As Samson came to the place where he had killed the lion, he found that bees had made honey in the rib cage. He ate some of the honey. When he got to the

place of the wedding, he gave his parents some honey, saying nothing from where it had come.

Since Samson was an Israelite, the Philistines gave him thirty attendants. As the wedding feast began, he set a riddle before his attendants. If in the seven days of the marriage feast they could not solve the riddle, they were each to give him a shirt and a garment. If they could tell him the riddle, he would give them each a shirt and a garment. They asked for the riddle and Samson said, “Out of the eater, came forth meat; out of the strong came forth sweetness.” Throughout the seven days, Samson’s wife cried and begged him to tell her the meaning of the riddle, because the attendants threatened to kill her for setting them up to give Samson clothing.

Samson’s wife made it totally miserable for him and Samson finally told her the riddle on the last day before sunset. She immediately told the Philistine attendants. They explained the riddle to Samson by saying, “What is sweeter than honey, and what is stronger than a lion?” Samson told them that if they had not threatened his wife, they would not have found out the meaning of the riddle. Samson was angry and went to Ashkelon, a neighboring town, where he killed thirty men and gave their clothing to his attendants. He went home angry and an enemy of the Philistines.

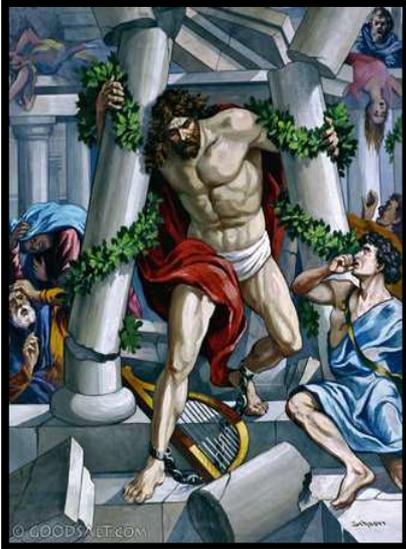
Samson stayed home for the wheat harvest. Then he took a baby goat and went back to his wife. When he got there, he found that her father had given her to the leading attendant as his wife. Samson again became angry. Using his tremendous speed and power, he caught three hundred jackals, animals like a small fox. He tied the tails of the jackals with a torch in between every two tails and let them loose in the fields, burning the Philistines’ crops and vineyards.

Now the Philistines were angry. When they were told that Samson had done this because his father-in-law had given his wife to his wedding attendant, they burned the father-in-law’s house killing the father and daughter. A delegation came to Samson and said that they had killed the father-in-law and daughter. When Samson heard this, he attacked the delegation killing a large number of them. He left and stayed in a cave in the rock called Etam near his home in the tribal area of Judah.

- The Angel of the Lord told Manoah’s childless wife that she would have a son.
- When the Angel of the Lord received their sacrifice, they were afraid and knew they had seen the Angel of the Lord.
- This son was to be a Nazarite and was named Samson.
- Samson married a Philistine woman who told his attendants the answer to his riddle. He killed thirty Philistine men and gave the clothing to his attendants.
- Samson took revenge on the Philistines by burning their crops when they killed his wife. Now he was an enemy of the Philistines.

SAMSON - ISRAEL'S JUDGE

Judges 15, 16



The situation between Samson and the Philistines, who ruled over Israel, changed. Now Samson had burned the crops of that area and killed many of its people. The Philistines sent part of their army to capture Samson so that he could be killed. When the Israelites saw the Philistine army, they asked why they had come. They were told that they wanted Samson. Three thousand men of Judah went up to where Samson was staying in a cave in the rock Etam. They said that they were going to tie him up and give him to the Philistines. Samson made them swear that they would not kill him, so he let them tie him up with two new ropes and take him to the Philistines. As the Philistines came toward him shouting, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson, and he broke the ropes on his arms. He picked up a jaw bone of a donkey and killed a thousand

Philistines with it. He now had a terrible thirst and prayed to God for water. God had water come from a hollow place to revive him.

Samson was now the unquestioned judge of Israel. God used him in a very strange way. Samson fought no battles. He simply caused such fear among the Philistines that their rule over Israel stopped and Israel had peace. As the years went by, Samson went where he pleased in the land of the Philistines. None dared challenge him as his strength and physical abilities were fearful. The Philistines felt that Samson's strength was due to something he had been given by God. If some way could be found to break God's blessing, perhaps he could be captured and removed as a danger to the nation.

Samson had a weakness. He gloried in his strength, and he was drawn like a magnet to the Philistines. This led him into seeking the company of Philistine women. When he boldly went to the city of Gaza to visit a Philistine woman, he was recognized. The city decided to trap him. They put archers on the city walls so that when he would leave in the morning, they could kill him. Instead of waiting till morning, Samson left the house at mid-night. When he came to the city gate, it was shut. The only way an army could get into the city was to use a battering ram, like a large tree trunk, to hit the gate again and again and break through it. When Samson saw that they had closed the gate, he took hold of it, tore it out of the wall, and carried it off on his shoulders to a hill near Hebron about thirty-five miles away. This added to the feeling of helplessness and frustration among the Philistines.

However, what Samson was doing in going to Philistine women was contrary to God's Law, especially the sixth commandment. On one of his trips into Philistine territory, he went to the home of Delilah. He fell in love with her and visited her often. The five

leaders of the Philistines learned of this and offered Delilah five thousand five hundred pieces of silver to find out the secret of his strength.

Delilah began pleading with Samson to tell her the secret of his strength. Samson first told her that if he were tied with seven new bow strings or vines not yet dried twisted together, he would be weak. So she had Philistine men waiting there. While Samson slept, she tied him up and then cried out, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson." Awaking, he snapped the cords that bound him and left.

On another occasion, he told her that new ropes would make him weak. When she tied him with new ropes, she cried out again, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson." Again he broke free of the new ropes. After this, he said that the braiding of the seven locks of his hair into a loom would make him weak. Again he broke free and left. Finally, after much more pleading, he told Delilah about being a Nazarite and not being allowed to cut his hair. Knowing his secret to his great strength, she told the leaders to again come with their money. While he was sleeping, she had his head shaved. This time when he woke up, his strength was gone and the Philistines took him prisoner.

The Philistines put out his eyes and chained him to the city grain grinder in place of an animal to grind their grain. Blinded and chained to grind the grain day after day, Samson undoubtedly prayed to God for forgiveness. His hair also began to grow.

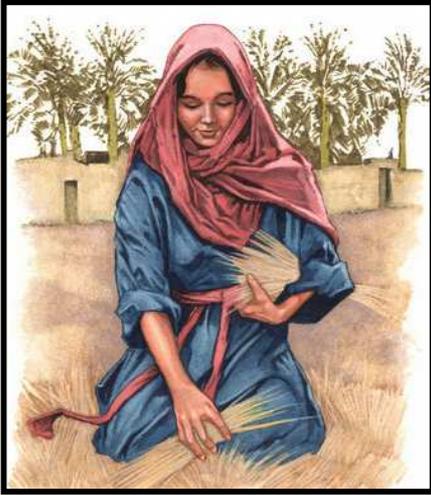
Not long after this, a great thanksgiving festival was held to praise the Philistine god, Dagon, for delivering Samson to them. At the festival, attended by over three thousand Philistines, including all their leaders, they called for Samson to come and entertain them, seemingly by singing and dancing. After entertaining them, Samson pretended to be tired and asked the boy who led him by the hand to lead him to the two main pillars of the great temple of Dagon. Taking one pillar in his right hand and the another pillar in his left hand, he prayed for God to restore his strength and to let him die with the Philistines. He bent over with all his strength and caused the pillars to break and fall. The whole temple collapsed killing all the leaders of the Philistine nation and many people. Thus he killed more in his death than in his life.

His family from the tribe of Dan came down, dug him out of the ruins, and buried him in honor in the family burial plot. In the book of Hebrews, Samson is listed as one of the heroes of faith. Samson was judge of Israel giving them peace for twenty years.

- When Samson's people delivered him to the Philistines, he broke the ropes and killed a thousand Philistines with the jaw bone of a donkey.
- Samson carried off the gates of Gaza on his shoulders.
- Deliah pleaded with Samson to learn the secret to his strength.
- The Philistines captured Samson, put out his eyes, and forced him to grind grain.
- God restored Samson's strength at a festival for their god Dagon.
- Samson pulled down the pillars of the temple of Dagon killing thousands of Philistines and their leaders. In his death, he killed more than in his life.

RUTH

Book of Ruth



In the days of our story, a family in Bethlehem, Elimelech and Naomi and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, moved to the neighboring country of Moab because of a famine in Israel. They stayed in Moab about ten years where the sons married two Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth. When Naomi's husband and both sons died, Naomi decided to go back to Bethlehem since the famine was over. She told her daughter-in-laws goodbye and urged them to stay in Moab. Orpah went back to her people, but Ruth refused to leave Naomi. She said, "Don't ask me to leave you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay. I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God." So Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem together.

When Naomi returned, her friends hardly knew her. She had gone through much sorrow and her face showed it. When they asked if it was really her, she replied, "Don't call me Naomi, (which means "pleasantness"), call me Mara (which means "bitterness"). She said this because she had left Bethlehem full having a husband and two sons, but she had returned empty with only a daughter-in-law.

They arrived at the time of barley harvest. Barley was used by the poor for baking. God had commanded that the poor be allowed to follow the reapers and gather whatever grain was missed or dropped. Ruth asked Naomi for permission to go to the fields to pick up grain. God guided Ruth to go to the fields of Boaz, a relative of Naomi. When Boaz came to his field, he noticed Ruth and asked about her. When he found out that she was with Naomi, he told her to only work in his field. He ordered his men to respect her and to let grain drop so that she would have more to pick up. When Ruth got home with a lot of grain, Naomi asked what field she had been in. When she heard, she was pleased and told Ruth to stay in the fields of Boaz.

At the end of the harvest, Boaz and his workers celebrated with a feast. Naomi told Ruth about a special provision God had made for His people. When a man died with no sons, the nearest male relative was to marry her and any children would be heirs of the dead husband. She told Ruth to put on her best clothes and to go to the feast because Boaz would sleep next to his grain after the feast. After he was asleep, Ruth was to lie down at his feet and pull the end of his robe over her. When Boaz would wake up, he would know what the custom required of him.

Ruth did as Naomi told her. When Boaz woke up, he was surprised to have a woman lying at his feet. He asked her who she was. Ruth asked him to be the redeeming relative of Naomi's property and to marry her as a part of the family.

Boaz was pleased. He told Ruth that there was a nearer relative and if this relative consented, he would marry her. He filled her shawl with grain and sent her home before daylight so that nobody would know what had taken place. Naomi told Ruth to wait, because Boaz would take care of the matter that day.

Boaz went to the city gate, the place of business, and spoke to the nearest relative. The relative, hearing that he would have to take another wife, agreed to let Boaz buy the property and marry Ruth. To seal the agreement, he gave Boaz his sandal. Boaz called in the city elders to be witnesses. He then married Ruth.

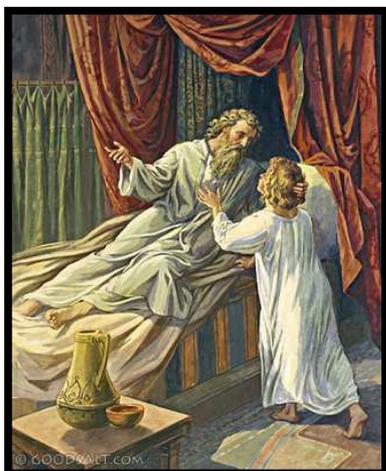
God blessed them with a son, Obed, who was the father of Jesse, who was the father of David, Israel's greatest king and an ancestor of Christ. In this way, a second Gentile woman became an ancestor of Jesus.

Ruth and Boaz lived in the days following Eli and Samson, just before Samuel and Saul.

- Naomi with her husband and two sons moved to Moab where the sons married Moabite women.
- Naomi's husband and sons died.
- Ruth refused to leave Naomi and claimed Naomi's God as her God.
- They moved back to Bethlehem where Ruth gleaned grain in the fields of Boaz.
- Boaz married Ruth, a Gentile, and she became an ancestor of Jesus.
- Their son Obed was the father of Jesse, the father of King David.

SAMUEL, THE LAST AND GREATEST OF THE JUDGES

1 Samuel 1- 8



While Samson was a judge in Israel, a man named Elkanah lived in the town of Ramah. He had two wives, Peninah, who had children, and Hannah who had no children. Every year Hannah went with Elkanah to Shiloh where Eli was the high priest. On one trip, Hannah prayed earnestly in the tabernacle for a son, promising to give him back to God. The following year God gave her a son and she named him Samuel, meaning “asked of God or answer to a prayer to God.” When Samuel was three or four years old, Hannah, according to her promise, took him to the tabernacle to live and serve with Eli, the priest. Every year she brought him a new set of clothing. God, also, gave Hannah more children, three sons and two daughters.

Eli had two sons, Hophni and Phineas, who were evil and immoral priests. When Samuel was about eleven years old, a prophet came to Eli and announced the day of judgment on Eli’s sons and the nation. His sons would die on the same day, and the nation of Israel would be shaken.

Following this, the Lord called to Samuel one night saying “Samuel, Samuel.” Samuel thought it was Eli calling him, but Eli said to him, “I did not call you.” Samuel laid back down to sleep. Again he heard, “Samuel, Samuel.” Again Eli said, “I did not call.” The third time Samuel heard his name called and went to Eli, Eli said that Samuel should say, “Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.” When the Lord called again, Samuel said, “Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.” God told Samuel of His coming judgment.

Twenty years later, 1086 B.C., judgment fell. Eli’s sons were killed in a battle with the Philistines. Israel was defeated and the Ark of the Covenant was captured. When Eli heard the news, he fell off his chair breaking his neck and died. He had judged Israel for forty years.

The defeat of Israel by the Philistines, the capture of the Ark, the death of Hophni, Phineas, and Eli caused the wife of Phineas to die in childbirth. Before she died, she named her son, Ichabod, meaning “the glory has departed from Israel, because the Ark is captured.” Israel was totally upset and mourned.

The Philistines took the Ark to the temple of Dagon in Ashdod and placed it before the idol as a token of thanksgiving and praise. The next morning Dagon was lying on its face before the Ark. They propped Dagon back up and the next morning, Dagon’s head and hands were cut off and it was lying on the threshold of the door before the Ark.

God caused the people in and around Ashdod to develop deadly sores, called emerods, on their bodies. Many died from them. The Philistines sent the Ark to the city of Gath

where the same thing happened. When the Ark was sent on to Ekron, the same thing happened and they asked that the Ark be returned to Israel. In addition to the deadly sores, God sent a plague of mice into the cities which destroyed the stored grain.

Finally, the Philistines decided to build a special cart, put the Ark on it, and as an offering they included five golden emerods and five golden mice, one for each of the main cities of the Philistines. They hitched two cows to the cart. The cows had never pulled a cart and they had to leave their new born calves. The cart was placed on the road to Israel. They thought that if the cart went straight to Israel, then Israel's God was the cause of their problems. If not, the plagues were only a chance happening. The cows mooed for their calves, but they left them and without a driver, they pulled the cart straight to Bethshemesh, an Israelite town.

The Ark had been gone from Israel for several months. When it arrived at Bethshemesh, the people took the Ark off the cart and with the wood of the cart offered a burnt offering to God. People came from all over to see the Ark. They became so disrespectful, bold, and foolish that they opened the Ark for all to see what was inside. God severely punished them by killing fifty thousand and seventy people. This frightened the people and they sent a message to the city of Kirjath-jearim to come and get the Ark. At Kirjath-jearim, a man was sanctified to watch over it for the next twenty years.

It was during those twenty years that Samson judged Israel. The next year after the death of Samson, Samuel gathered Israel together at Mizpah to rededicate themselves to God and to turn from their idolatry. They poured out water before God in confession of their sins and as a prayer for God's cleansing and renewal.

The Philistines heard of the gathering of Israel and came to attack them. The Israelites asked Samuel to pray for them. He offered a lamb as a burnt offering and asked God to help His people. God answered with such terrible thunder and lightning that the Philistine army was totally confused and frightened. The Israelites won a great victory. Samuel set up a monument and called it Ebenezer, meaning, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." The Philistines did not enter the land of Israel again while Samuel was a priest and judge.

- Samuel, an answer to prayer, was born to Hannah and Elkanah.
- As a young child, Samuel was left at the tabernacle to serve with Eli, the priest.
- The Lord spoke to Samuel, telling him of His coming judgment.
- When God's judgment fell, Eli and his two evil sons died, the Ark was captured, and Israel was defeated by the Philistines.
- The Philistines sent the Ark back to Israel because of God's judgment on them.
- After the death of Samson, God delivered Israel from the Philistines with a terrible thunder and lightening storm and a victory in battle.

SAUL, ISRAEL'S FIRST KING

Samuel 8-12



Samuel lived in Ramah where he judged Israel. There he set up an altar to the Lord. As he grew old, he appointed his sons as judges. They took bribes and twisted the truth in their judging. The leaders of Israel were very unhappy and came to Samuel asking for a king. In this request, they were rejecting God as their ruler. Samuel was upset, but God told him to grant the people their wish that they were not rejecting him, but God Himself. In granting Israel their desire to have an earthly king reigning over them, Samuel was to tell them how the rule of an earthly king would affect their lives. The leaders still insisted that they wanted a king like the other nations to judge them and to lead them in battle.

God had Samuel select Saul, a young man from the family of Kish and the tribe of Benjamin to be their first king. Saul was a handsome man, thirty years old, with five children. He was head and shoulders taller than anyone in Israel, perhaps about seven feet tall. He looked kingly. At first, he was humble, but as time went on he became proud and disobedient to God.

Samuel arranged to have Saul crowned king at Mizpah. Saul was so humble and meek that he hid under the piled up tents and baggage. God told the people where to find him. They had to drag him out to crown him king. Many rejoiced but some despised him as king. God moved some men to go with Saul to help him set up his kingdom in the following two years.

Then Nahash, the Ammonite king, decided to invade Israel. He surrounded the city of Jabesh-Gilead and demanded its surrender. The terms he gave were harsh. The right eye of everyone in the city was to be put out as an insult to Israel. The city asked for a week to find help, but if there was no help, they would surrender. When Saul heard what Nahash was planning to do, the Spirit of the Lord aroused his anger.

Saul took a couple of oxen and chopped them up into pieces of meat. He sent these pieces of beef with messengers throughout the nation with a very persuasive message, "Whoever does not come out and join me in this battle, this piece of meat is what I will make your oxen and cattle into." In a short time he raised an army of three hundred and thirty thousand men. He notified Jabesh-Gilead that he would be there the next day. The people of Jabesh-Gilead told Nahash that they would surrender to him the next day, but that night Saul surprised Nahash and defeated his army.

Many of the Israelites now told Samuel that all who had despised Saul should be killed. Saul objected to their request and said that nobody was to be put to death because God had brought salvation to Israel. God had protected and blessed Israel with a victory.

Samuel called all to go to Gilgal and again crown Saul king. After the rejoicing, Samuel spoke to the people about the Monarchy, their relation to it and God's relation to them. First, Samuel caused Israel to witness before God that he had been honest and faithful in his position as judge and leader. Then, beginning with Moses and Aaron, Samuel reviewed their history in the Promised Land. He showed that God had been their Helper and had been faithful to them. God had sent the judges to deliver them, and He had given Saul the victory over Nahash. Saul and the people were to be faithful to God. If they were not, God would destroy both them and their king. In rejecting God by desiring a king, they had sinned.

To understand that they had sinned, Samuel pointed out that it was harvest time. He said that storms do not come at harvest time, but he would ask God to send thunder and rain. God suddenly sent a thunder storm and the people were terrified. Finally realizing their sin against God, they asked for forgiveness, confessing that on top of their idolatry, they had rejected God's leadership. Samuel said that he would ask God to forgive them, and he would continue to teach and pray for them. He said that God's love for them would not cease, that God had chosen them to be His people. They must fear God, serve Him with all their hearts, and never forget what great things He had done for them.

Of all the judges, Samuel was the greatest. All the other judges delivered Israel spiritually and physically with force, but the people always turned to idolatry again. Samuel united them spiritually, reformed them with God's Word, and delivered them with prayer. His work set up the years of the United Monarchy, a period of one hundred and twenty years

- The Israelites rejected God by demanding a king.
- God chose Saul to be their king.
- Saul raised an army to defend Jabesh-Gilead.
- Under Saul, God gave the Israelites a great victory over the Ammonites.
- Samuel called on God to send thunder and rain to convict the people of their sin.
- Of all the judges, Samuel was the greatest.

GOD REJECTS SAUL AS KING

1 Samuel 13-16



About six years after the battle with the Ammonites, Saul had an army of three thousand men. He kept two thousand with him at Micmash. Jonathan, the crown prince, had one thousand men in Gibeah. Saul had sent all the others willing to serve as warriors to their homes. Saul seemingly was content to keep the peace, but Jonathan desired to fight. He attacked and destroyed a Philistine garrison at Geba about six miles away. When Saul heard of this, he had the trumpet blown and the news spread throughout Israel.

The Philistines gathered a large army together and marched to Micmash, but Saul moved to Gilgal about fifteen miles away.

Saul called for Samuel to come to offer a burnt offering to God, seeking God's blessing. Samuel sent word he would come in seven days. While Saul waited, his army began deserting for fear of the Philistines, and went looking for places to hide. The desertion of his men was a real test for Saul's obedience to God's will in the offering of sacrifices. Only the Levites descended from Aaron could serve as priests and offer sacrifices. Among the heathen nations, the king could offer sacrifices. Saul felt that as the God-appointed king he could offer a sacrifice, also.

Saul had just finished offering the sacrifice when Samuel arrived. Samuel asked Saul what he had done. Saul said that he thought the Philistines would attack him and no sacrifice would have been offered. He said that he forced himself and offered the sacrifice. Samuel told him that he had been foolish and had sinned against God. If Saul had been faithful and obedient, he would have had his kingdom last, but now God was going to remove him as king and appoint another in his place. Samuel and Saul went to Gibeah and joined forces with Jonathan. Their army was not well supplied with weapons, because the Philistines who ruled over them would not allow the Israelites to have weapons or blacksmiths to make weapons.

Jonathan and his armor bearer alone attacked and destroyed another Philistine garrison not far from Gibeah. When they did this, God sent an earthquake among the Philistines terrifying them and causing them to fight one another. Scouts from Gibeah reported that the entire Philistine army was fleeing in total disorder. Saul with his army fought and chased the Philistines to Aijalon, about twenty miles away.

Saul did another foolish thing by placing a curse on anyone who would eat any food that day. The men grew so tired that they could not run or fight anymore. Jonathan did not know about the curse and he refreshed himself by eating some wild honey. The returning

soldiers were so hungry that in the evening when they butchered the livestock, they ate it before it had been well cooked. This upset Saul for by doing this they sinned against God's Law which said they must not eat meat with blood in it. Saul caused this sin with his curse, but now he forced them to cook the meat before eating it.

Saul wanted to attack the Philistines that night, so he had a priest ask God if they should attack. God did not answer, which meant that someone had sinned. Lots were drawn and finally Jonathan was chosen because he had eaten honey, not knowing about the curse. Saul said that Jonathan would have to die, but the army told Saul that Jonathan would live and not die. Jonathan had started the battle in which God helped them defeat the Philistines. With this defeat, the rule of the Philistines over Israel was ended.

Sometime after this battle, Samuel told Saul that God wanted to bring judgment on the Amalekites, who had harassed Israel during their desert journey. The command of God was clear; wipe out the Amalekites, all people and animals were to die. Saul with two hundred and ten thousand men defeated the Amalekites. However, Saul changed God's command and let the people keep the best livestock, and he kept Agag, the Amalekite king, alive. Saul led a triumphant procession of the army with the plunder and King Agag chained to his chariot, as heathen kings commonly did after a victory. Saul led the procession all the way to Gilgal.

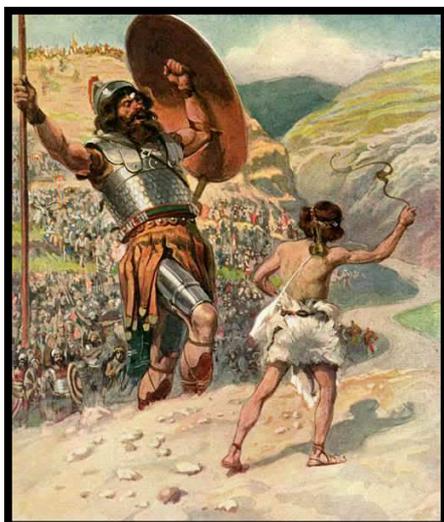
When Samuel arrived, Saul greeted him and said that he had obeyed God's command. Samuel asked about all the livestock. Saul said the people wanted them for a sacrifice. Samuel scolded Saul for his disobedience and rebellion against God. He killed King Agag, ending the royal procession.

Samuel told Saul that God had rejected him as king and would anoint another as king. When Samuel whirled to go, Saul begged him to stay and honor him before the people. Samuel did so and then returned to his home in Ramah. Samuel never saw Saul again, but he mourned for him for a long time.

- Saul foolishly offered the sacrifice before Samuel arrived.
- God delivered the Philistines into the hands of Jonathan and Saul.
- Jonathan was spared by the army, though he broke Saul's oath by eating honey.
- Saul disobeyed God's command after defeating the Amalekites.
- Because of Saul's disobedience, God rejected him as king.

DAVID, CHOSEN TO BE KING - HE KILLS GOLIATH

1 Samuel 17-19



Saul established Israel as a nation. During the next fifteen years, Saul had to fight all the nations around him, the Ammonites, the Philistines, the Edomites, the kings of Zobah, and the Amalekites. Because of his arrogance and disobedience, God sent Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint David from the tribe of Judah to be the next king.

David, a shepherd, was about sixteen, the youngest son of Jesse. He was a talented musician, gifted in playing the harp and singing. Physically, he was extremely powerful and courageous, killing a lion and a bear with a club to save his sheep. The shepherd's weapons were a sling and the rod, a metal or stone tipped club carried at the waist.

In judgment for Saul's disobedience, God permitted an evil spirit to torment Saul making him fly into murderous rages. Being very powerful and skilled with weapons, it was not safe to be near him at such a time. It was noticed that music would calm him. Apparently, David had become known for his playing the harp and singing. Saul ordered David to be brought to court to play the harp when the black moods came upon him. God's guiding hand was very evident in this. David had to learn how to rule and how not to rule. While David was at court, he was, also, trained in the use of weapons and was called an armor bearer of Saul. Saul loved David and asked Jesse, his father, to let David stay at court. After about two years, war developed with the Philistines, and David was sent home.

In those days, armies often camped opposite each other and had their champions fight for their armies. In this case, they were camped on opposite sides of the valley of Elah with a little stream in between. Goliath, the Philistine champion, challenged Israel to choose a champion to fight him. Goliath, a giant, was nine feet six inches tall. His families, the last of the Anakim, were from a race of giants who had been a powerful nation in Canaan. His suit of armor weighed about one hundred pounds, the head of his iron spear weighed about twenty pounds, and its staff was about two inches thick. He was frightening to see. For forty days he challenged Israel, cursing and insulting Israel and their God.

David's three oldest brothers were in the army, so Jesse sent David to the battle field with food for his sons and to get a report. When David heard Goliath challenge Israel and dishonor God, he asked why no one would fight him. Saul had even offered his daughter in marriage to the man who killed Goliath. Also, that man would become one of the nobility and tax free. When David volunteered to fight Goliath, his oldest brother scolded him. Saul tried to change David's mind, but then he offered David his coat of

armor and weapons. David refused them and took only his staff and sling. The sling was a very dangerous long range weapon, used even in battle. David was an expert with it.

David took five smooth stones from the stream, and went to meet Goliath. Goliath asked David if he thought he was a dog coming with a stick. He told David that he would kill him and let the vultures eat him. David replied that he was coming in the name of the God of Israel, and that he would kill him and cut off his head. David put a stone in his sling and ran to meet Goliath. God made the stone hit Goliath in the forehead under the helmet, breaking through the skull. When Goliath fell down, David pulled out Goliath's sword and cut off his head. The Israelites severely defeated the Philistines.

Saul kept David in his army and made him the leader of one thousand men. David and Jonathan became very close friends. God blessed David making him successful in every battle and a national hero. The women sang songs saying, "Saul has killed his thousands, but David has killed his ten-thousands." Saul saw David as the next king and he became David's enemy. One day as David was playing his harp and singing during Saul's black mood, Saul tried twice to pin David to the wall with a javelin, a throwing spear.

Saul finally fulfilled his promise that the one who killed Goliath would marry his daughter. When he saw that Michal loved David, the marriage was arranged. Michal was about twelve years older than David who was about twenty-one.

Another war developed with the Philistines. In this battle, David was looked on as the leader in Saul's army. Saul's jealousy increased and he told Jonathan, the crown prince, and those who served him that David must be killed. Jonathan pleaded for David's life. There was peace for a time until another battle developed with the Philistines in which David leading Saul's army won a great battle. When David returned in the evening, Saul went into one of his black moods and he again tried to pin David to the wall with his javelin. David dodged it and escaped to his home.

Michal told him that he would have to leave before morning, or he would be killed. She let him down out of a window and David fled to Samuel in Ramah. Michal made a figure in bed making it look like David. In the morning, Saul's men came to arrest David, but Michal said that he was sick. Saul said to bring David in his bed and he would kill him.

Saul was furious when told of the deception and sent three separate squads to arrest David who had escaped to Samuel. While David was with Samuel and the prophets singing, praising God, and prophesying, each squad coming to take David was forced by God to join in the prophesying. Saul himself went, and was also forced to prophesy.

- Samuel anointed David, the son of Jesse from the tribe of Judah, to be king.
- David played his harp to relieve Saul's black moods.
- David became famous by killing Goliath.
- Michal, Saul's daughter, was given to David as his wife.
- In jealousy, Saul tried to kill David twice with his javelin.
- Michal helped David escape.

GOD PROTECTS DAVID

1 Samuel 20-31



David now fled from Samuel to Jonathan and told him that Saul wanted to kill him. Jonathan did not believe it. David asked Jonathan to excuse him from a three day feast. If Saul asked why David was not there, Jonathan was to say that he gave him permission to go to Bethlehem. If he became angry, then it was true that Saul wanted to kill David. David and Jonathan went into the field to talk and make a plan. They swore everlasting friendship to one another. On the second day of the feast, Saul asked where David was. Jonathan said that he had given him permission to go to Bethlehem. Saul became angry, accused David of wanting the throne, and that he had to die. When Jonathan asked why David should be killed, Saul became so angry that he threw a javelin at Jonathan. Jonathan left now knowing that Saul wanted to kill David.

The third day at the set time, Jonathan went out to the field with his archer boy. He told the boy to pick up the arrows that he shot. As he was picking up the arrows, he shot an arrow and told him that the arrow was beyond him. When David, who was hiding heard this, he knew he had to flee for his life. The boy brought the arrows back and Jonathan sent him home. David and Jonathan said a tearful farewell, asking God to bless and keep the oath of friendship they had sworn to one another.

David fled to Nob where Ahimelech, the priest, gave him food and the sword of Goliath. He went on to Gath, a Philistine city, where Achish was king. There he was recognized, but he pretended to be crazy, jabbering, drooling, and scribbling on the walls. Achish declared him harmless and sent him away. David returned to the cave of Adullam where his family and others came to him until he had a group of four hundred men. David even took his parents to the king of Moab for their safety.

The prophet Gad told David to return to Judah to the forest of Hareth. Doeg, an Edomite, told Saul that Ahimelech, the priest, had given David food and the sword of Goliath. Because Ahimelech had helped David, Saul had Doeg kill him and all the priests. Abiathar, a son of Ahimelech, escaped and went to David. He brought with him an Ephod through which the priests would ask God's guidance.

When David heard that the Philistines were attacking the city of Keilah to steal their harvested grain, David asked God if he should attack the Philistines and save Keilah. God told him to save Keilah. Again David defeated the Philistines. When Saul heard where David was, he made plans to trap David in the city. David called Abiathar to ask God for guidance. God told David to leave Keilah. With six hundred men in his army, David went to the wilderness of Ziph. Jonathan visited and encouraged him, telling him that God would someday make him king.

Betrayed by the Ziphites, David moved to the wilderness of Maon. Saul pursued him, but had to leave to fight the Philistines. David moved to the valley of Engedi, near the Dead Sea. Saul pursued him there and went into a large cave for a short time. David and his men were back in the cave. They urged David to kill Saul, but David said that Saul was anointed by God and that God would have to remove him. However, David cut a piece off of Saul's robe which had been set aside. When Saul left the cave, David came out, and from a distance showed Saul the piece of robe proving he had spared his life. Saul commended David and asked him to swear that he would not wipe out his family when he became king.

David moved to the area of Mt. Carmel where Nabal, a rich man, had three thousand sheep and one thousand goats. While there, David and his men protected Nabal's flocks. At shearing time, David asked Nabal for a gift since he had protected his flocks. Nabal rudely refused. Nabal's wife, Abigail, quickly took David a large gift which took away his anger. The next day when she told Nabal what she had done, Nabal had a heart attack and died ten days later. When the days of mourning were over, Abigail became David's wife. Saul, meanwhile, had given Michal, David's wife, to another man named Phaltiel.

Once more David was betrayed by the Ziphites, who told Saul where David was. Saul came after David with three thousand men. David saw where Saul had made camp and went with Abishai, Joab's brother, into Saul's camp at night. He took Saul's spear and water jug while God made Saul and his men sleep soundly. David called from a distance and told Saul that he had again spared his life. Saul admitted wrong and said that David would be king someday. After this Saul went home.

David now went to the land of the Philistines where King Achish gave David and his men the city of Ziklag. From there David raided Israel's enemies, left no survivors, and gave some of the plunder to Achish. When Saul heard that David was raiding Israel's enemies, he quit trying to kill David.

Once again war broke out between the Philistines and Israel. The Philistines refused to let David join in the battle and told him to stay in Ziklag. Since Samuel had died, Saul went to a witch to find out the future of the battle. God let Samuel appear to the witch and Saul, and to tell Saul of the coming defeat, his death, and the death of his sons. In the battle the next day, the Philistines badly wounded Saul and killed his sons. Not wanting to be taken prisoner, Saul fell on his sword and died. Saul had reigned over Israel for forty years. David and his men mourned for Saul and his sons.

- Jonathan and David pledged their friendship.
- Saul vowed to kill David causing David to flee from Saul.
- Ahimelech, the priest, gave David bread and Goliath's sword.
- Twice David spared Saul's life.
- Since Samuel had died, Saul went to a witch to find out the future. Samuel appeared and foretold what would happen the next day.
- Saul and his sons died in the battle with the Philistines.
- Saul, Israel's first king, reigned over Israel for forty years.

DAVID BECOMES KING

1 Samuel 30 - 2 Samuel 12



While David was gone to King Achish, the Amalekites raided Ziklag. When David and his six hundred men returned to Ziklag, they found it had been burned, all the families had been captured, and all they owned taken as plunder. David had Abiathar, the priest, bring the Ephod and ask God what to do. God said that David and his men should pursue the Amalekites and all would be recovered. Leaving behind two hundred men, David and four hundred men went in pursuit. They found an Egyptian slave

who was left behind. He guided them to the Amalekite camp. David attacked them and killed all but four hundred and recovered all that had been taken.

After this, David using the Ephod through Abiathar, asked God what he should do. God told him to move to Hebron. There the tribe of Judah anointed him king when he was thirty years old. He reigned in Hebron for seven and a half years.

During this time, there was civil war between Saul's younger son, Ishbosheth and David. Saul's general, Abner, kept Ishbosheth in power. In the battle between the two armies, Ishbosheth's army was defeated. Abner offered to bring the northern ten tribes to David. He and David met to make arrangements, and Abner left in peace. However Joab, David's general, wanted to kill Abner because in the battle with Saul's army, Abner had killed Asahel, Joab's brother. When Joab sent messengers to bring Abner back to talk, he killed him. David sharply rebuked Joab, mourned publicly for Abner, and buried him in honor at Hebron. A short time later, two soldiers from Ishbosheth's army came to Ishbosheth's palace and killed him while he was sleeping. With the death of Ishbosheth, the northern tribes came to Hebron to anoint David king.

One of the first things David had to do was to establish a capital city for the nation of Israel. He chose Jerusalem that was neither North nor South. It was inhabited by Jebusites who felt their city was invincible. However, David's men found a way through the underground water system and took the city. (This city, Salem, was set aside as special by God at the time of Melchizedek, Abraham, and Isaac.)

After David had become king over all Israel, the Philistines tried to defeat him twice in the Valley of Rephaim. The first time God simply told David to go and fight that he would win. The second time, God had David go behind the Philistines and when he heard a rustling in the mulberry trees, God was leading him into battle. The second battle resulted in a severe defeat of the Philistines.

David had moved the tabernacle into Jerusalem and he wanted the Ark of the Covenant to be in its rightful place in the Holy of Holies. All Israel's enemies had been defeated and

a time of peace had come. Finally, the Ark was brought into Jerusalem with a great celebration.

In gratitude for all his blessings, David wanted to build a temple for God in Jerusalem. God told David through Nathan, the prophet, that since David was a man of war, his son, a man of peace, would build the temple. However, God would establish the dynasty and throne of David forever. This was a promise that David would be the ancestor of Jesus, the Messiah, who would be called “the son of David,” and would be the divine and everlasting King.

David, also, remembered his sworn promise of peace with Jonathan. He sought out Jonathan’s crippled son, Mephibosheth, now about twenty years old. He gave the lands of Saul to him, had him sit at the royal table and live in Jerusalem.

As David grew older, he did not always take part in the fighting but would join the army to claim the victory. During the Ammonite war, David stayed home in the palace. He fell into sin when he noticed a woman named Bathsheba, called her to the palace and committed adultery with her. Bathsheba was the granddaughter of Ahithophel, David’s chief counselor. Her husband was Uriah, a Hittite, one of David’s mighty men. Since Bathsheba became pregnant, David had Uriah sent back from the battle field to try to cover up his sin by letting him go home. When Uriah refused to go home to Bathsheba, David sent him back with written orders to have him killed in battle. David waited for the days of mourning to go by and then took Bathsheba to be his wife.

Nathan, the prophet, came to David and through a story of a rich man who took a poor man’s lamb to feed a guest, told David that he had sinned. David confessed his sin, but God pronounced a three fold judgment: the child would die, the sword, meaning violence or evil, would never leave David’s house, and what he did secretly with Bathsheba would be done publicly in his house.

When their baby boy was born, God made him become sick. For days David prayed in vain for the baby’s life. After the child had died, David went to the temple and worshiped. His servants were amazed at this behavior after the baby’s death. David simply said, “I shall go to him. He shall not return to me.”

God gave David and Bathsheba four other sons. God chose Solomon, the youngest, to rule after David. We are told in Scripture that Solomon was loved by the Lord. He was given another name through the prophet Nathan; Jedidiah, meaning “loved by the Lord.”

- David returned all who were captured in Ziklag.
- David was anointed king of Judah in Hebron where he reigned for seven years.
- The Northern Tribes of Israel made David king after the death of Ishbosheth.
- David established Jerusalem, the City of Peace, as the capital.
- Because of David’s sin with Bathsheba, their son died.
- God gave Bathsheba and David four other sons. Solomon was the youngest.

GOD'S JUDGMENT AND MERCY TO DAVID
2 Samuel 13-19



David always remembered that his sin was the cause of the evil that plagued him in his latter days. It kept him penitent and close to God. After the death of his son, the judgment began with Amnon, the crown prince. He asked David to send Tamar to his house to cook him some food. Amnon mistreated and humiliated Tamar, even though she was Absalom's sister. Absalom, who was next in line to the throne after Amnon, took her into his house, comforted and supported her.

Two years later, Absalom invited all his brothers and sisters to a feast at his house. At a given signal, he had his servants kill Amnon. Absalom fled to Geshur where he stayed for three years. Joab arranged his return to Jerusalem, but he spent two more years confined to his house before he was reconciled to his father David.

As God had foretold, evil was always going to be found in David's house. Ahithophel, Bathsheba's grandfather and David's brilliant and chief counselor, turned from David to Absalom after Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, was killed. They planned to make Absalom king. Absalom began a popularity campaign to cause people, particularly the Northern Tribes, to desire him as king in place of King David. He was now crown prince, and told the people he would be better than David in judging people's complaints. When Ahithophel and Absalom thought all was ready to take over the throne, Absalom told David that he needed to go to Hebron to fulfill a vow he had made to God.

When plans for the rebellion were completed in Hebron, a trumpet was blown and the Northern Tribes declared Absalom to be king. This meant war. David quickly left Jerusalem so that he would not be trapped there. He left his loyal priests, Zadok and Abiathar, to send messages through their sons. He asked Hushai, a loyal counselor, to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. David, also, left ten concubines as a sign that he still claimed to be king and was going to fight for his kingdom.

Ahithophel advised Absalom to quickly do two things. He was to spread a tent on top of the palace claiming David's harem as his own. Ahithophel secondly advised Absalom to let him take twelve thousand men and chase David because now he would find David tired, weak, and disorganized. He would only kill David and Absalom would be king. Absalom called Hushai and asked his advice. Hushai said that that this was not the time to attack David. David and his mighty men were angry and would be hiding. Absalom should gather a large army, then find David and his men and kill them. Absalom took Hushai's advice. When Ahithophel heard this, he went to his house and hung himself. He knew that given time, David and his men would defeat Absalom.

The plan was carried to David by the sons of the priest. David went to a city about sixty miles from Jerusalem where he was given shelter and time to prepare to meet Absalom. David and his men chose to meet Absalom's army in a nearby forest. David asked his army to show mercy to Absalom. In the battle, Absalom's army was defeated losing twenty thousand men. Absalom tried to flee on his mule, but his long hair caught on a low branch of an oak tree, jerked him out of the saddle, and left him hanging. When Joab was told this, he threw three throwing spears into Absalom's heart. Absalom was thrown in a ditch and covered with a heap of stones. Joab then blew the trumpet recalling the army and ending the fight.

Messengers were sent to David reporting the death of Absalom. David cried saying, "Oh, Absalom, my son, my son." The army was sad when they heard that David was mourning and felt as though they had lost the battle. Finally, Joab told David to stop crying, or his army would desert him. David listened to Joab and thanked the army.

Peace returned when David as king returned to Jerusalem.

- Absalom conspired to be made king with the help of Ahithophel.
- Absalom rejected Ahithophel's advice and followed Hushai's counsel.
- David's army defeated Absalom's army and Absalom was killed.
- David cried saying, "Oh, Absalom, my son, my son."
- David was brought back to Jerusalem as king.

THE END OF KING DAVID'S REIGN

2 Samuel 22-24 1 Chronicles 21



After the rebellion of Absalom and a three year famine, it seemed to the Philistines that the nation of Israel was weak and could be conquered. Four battles were fought with the Philistines in which the four sons of Goliath were killed. In the first battle, one of Goliath's sons would have killed David when he became exhausted, but Abishai, Joab's brother, killed the giant. After this David was not allowed on the battle field by the army. Age had taken his great strength and endurance. After these victories, a period of peace followed.

In this period, the nation of Israel sinned against God by becoming proud of itself and its power. David, in his own sinful foolish pride, wanted to know how large his army was. He told Joab, his general, to take a count of how many warriors there were in the army of Israel. Joab objected, saying that it was not necessary nor right, but David insisted. Joab spent nine months and twenty

days doing this. He reported that in the Northern Tribes of Israel there were eight hundred thousand warriors and five hundred thousand in Judah.

As soon as David heard the report, he knew he had sinned. He confessed his sin to God, and asked God to forgive him. God sent the prophet Gad to him with the choice of three judgments. 1) To have a seven year famine. 2) To be defeated and chased by his enemies for three months. 3) To have three days in which the Angel of the Lord would come over the land destroying the people. David did not want to fall into the hands of man. Instead he chose to fall into the hands of God, because God's mercy is great.

God the Father sent the Angel of the Lord to carry out His judgment. In the next three days, people died as the Angel of the Lord moved over the land of Israel. When the Angel of the Lord came to Jerusalem, God told Him to stop. Seventy thousand Israelites had died. David and the elders of Israel, clothed in sackcloth, saw the Angel of the Lord standing between heaven and earth over Jerusalem, a sword in His hand. They fell on their faces in awe and fear.

David prayed to God saying that he alone was guilty. His house should be punished, not the people. The Angel of the Lord told Gad to tell David to go to the threshing floor of Araunah, the Jebusite, build an altar, and sacrifice there. Araunah and his sons were threshing wheat. When they all saw the Angel of the Lord, they tried to hide. David asked Araunah to sell him the threshing floor. Araunah offered to give it and whatever was needed for the sacrifice, but David refused to take it as a gift. It was for God and he would pay the full price. David bought the threshing floor and all that he needed for the sacrifice for six hundred gold shekels, about sixty thousand dollars. David built the altar and offered burnt and peace offerings. When he did this, God the Father answered

David's prayer with fire from heaven which consumed the altar and offering. God told the Angel of the Lord to put away His sword into His sheath.

Solomon later built the temple on this place, on the threshing floor of Araunah, the Jebusite. (Today the Mohammedan Mosque of Omar is built on this site where Solomon's temple stood.)

The last years of David's life were devoted to preparing the transfer of his kingdom to Solomon. By inspiration he drew up the blueprints for the temple and stockpiled the building materials. He urged his officers and people to give to the construction of the temple. He charged Solomon to build the temple and to be faithful before God.

Not long before he died, he became sick. A young woman, Abishag, was selected to take care of him. Even while he was dying, evil was still to plague his house.

Adonijah, his son and younger brother of Absalom, tried to take the throne. Enlisting the help of Joab, the general, and Abiathar, the priest, Adonijah held a feast in which he was declared king. Nathan, the prophet, and Bathsheba told David about this deception. David called for Zadok, Nathan, and Benaiah and said, "Set Solomon on my mule and take him down to Gihon. There have them anoint him king over Israel. Blow the trumpet and shout, 'Long live King Solomon.' Then have him sit on my throne and reign in my place. I have appointed him ruler over Israel and Judah." Escorted by the body guard of David's mighty men, they took Solomon to Gihon on David's royal mule and anointed him king and seated him on David's throne. The people rejoiced. When Adonijah's crowd heard this, they quickly left their banquet in fear.

David bowed in worship on his bed and said, "Praise to the Lord, the God of Israel, who has allowed my eyes to see a successor on my throne today." David died in honor, peace, and faith. His throne, God said, would last forever pointing to Jesus who is called in the Bible, the "Son of David." David died in 971 B.C. having ruled for forty years.

- David sinned by ordering a count of the fighting men in the entire army.
- God gave a three-fold judgment. David chose to fall into the hands of God.
- The Angel of the Lord carried out the judgment and 70,000 people died.
- David bought the threshing floor of Araunah to offer a sacrifice.
- Solomon built the Temple on this site in Jerusalem.
- The Mohammedan Mosque of Omar is built where Solomon's temple stood.
- Adonijah tried to take David's throne. Instead, Solomon was anointed king.
- David ruled for 40 years, 7 years over Judah and 33 years over all Israel.
- David's faith is shown in all the Psalms which he wrote.

SOLOMON, THE HUMBLE, WISE, AND PENITENT KING

1 Kings 2-11 2 Chronicles 1-9



The worship life of Israel was still not centralized when Solomon became king. David had brought the Tabernacle and Ark to Jerusalem, but the people sacrificed where they wanted on various high hills. Gibeon was known as a place of sacrifice. Solomon went there early in his reign to seek God's blessing and offered one thousand sacrifices there.

There God appeared to Solomon in a dream. God said to him. "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."

Solomon answered, "You have shown great kindness to my father, David, as he walked before you in faithfulness, righteousness, and with an upright heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne. O Lord, my God, You have made me king in place of my father, David, but I am young and I do not know how to carry out my duties. I am here among the people You have chosen, a great people, too many to count, so give me an understanding heart to rule your people and to know right from wrong."

The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this, so God said to him, "Since you have asked for this and not for long life, or wealth for yourself, or the death of your enemies, but for understanding and ruling justly, I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and understanding heart. There has never been anyone like you, nor will there ever be anyone like you. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for, both riches and honor so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. If you walk in My ways and obey My commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life." Then Solomon awoke and knew that it had been a dream. He returned to Jerusalem, stood before the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, and sacrificed burnt offerings. Then he gave a feast for all his court.

Solomon made a treaty with Pharaoh, king of Egypt and married his daughter. He brought her to the City of David until he finished building his palace, the temple of the Lord, and the wall around Jerusalem.

Solomon began building the temple four years after he became king, and completed it in seven years. At the dedication of the temple, the Shekinah, the Cloud of God's glory, filled the temple and none could enter while it was there. His dedicatory prayer was most beautiful. In his seventh year, he began building his palace and completed it thirteen years later.

Solomon showed his love for the Lord by walking according to the statutes of his father, David. His wisdom became known worldwide. The Queen of Sheba and others came to him to test him and hear his wisdom. All were amazed.

Solomon's downfall was that he disobeyed God and married princesses from different countries, establishing peaceful alliances with them. God had forbidden intermarriage because of the danger of worshiping heathen gods. In time, Solomon built temples for his many wives and began to worship in them. Thus he became an idolator and led Israel into idolatry. He finally had 700 wives and 300 concubines.

God became angry with Solomon and told him that his kingdom would be split after his death. Because of David, his father, this would not be done in his lifetime. In judgment, God began raising up enemies to Israel: Hadad in the South, Rezin of Syria in the North, and Jeroboam, the governor from the tribe of Ephraim.

God sent Ahijah, the prophet, to Jeroboam. Ahijah was wearing a new robe. He took it off and tore it into twelve pieces giving Jeroboam ten pieces, saying that God would give him the ten tribes in the North. To Rehoboam, Solomon's son, God would give two tribes, Judah and Benjamin. Instead of waiting for Solomon to die, Jeroboam tried to rebel and had to flee to Egypt to avoid being killed by King Solomon.

Solomon wrote the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. In his old age, Solomon repented. It is interesting to note what he said about Rehoboam, heir to the throne, "who knows whether he will be wise or a fool, but he will reign over all that I have." Elsewhere, Solomon spoke again to his son urging him "to turn to God, to fear God, and to keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. "

Solomon died in 931 B.C. having ruled 40 years.

- Solomon became Israel's third king.
- God blessed him with great wisdom and wealth.
- Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem.
- Solomon, also, built heathen temples for his 700 wives and 300 concubines and worshiped in them.
- God foretold the Divided Kingdom, 10 tribes in Israel, 2 tribes in Judah.
- Solomon repented in his old age. He wrote the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.
- Solomon died in 931 B.C. having reigned for forty years.

THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

1 Kings 12-14 2 Chronicles 10-12



We will first follow the kings of Israel until the Northern Ten Tribes are sent into captivity and disappear from history.

When Rehoboam, son of Solomon, became king, the Northern Tribes asked Rehoboam for a lighter tax load, as under Solomon they had been heavily taxed. His older advisors told him to agree to the request, but Rehoboam listened to his younger supporters who told him to increase the taxes. The Northern Tribes rebelled against Rehoboam and killed the tax collector who was sent to collect taxes. The Northern Tribes then turned to Jeroboam, their former governor, to be their king. After this, the Northern Ten Tribes were known as Israel, and the two Southern Tribes as

Judah.

Jeroboam became king of the Northern Ten Tribes, now known as Israel, just as the Prophet Ahijah had foretold. The people knew the true God, yet they quickly followed Jeroboam in accepting idolatry. Jeroboam set up places of worship at Bethel and Dan and had idols of golden calves placed in each. He allowed any man to become a priest if he paid one young bullock and seven rams. He changed the religious calendar so that the feasts would be held a month earlier than they were held in Judah.

God rebuked Jeroboam through an unknown prophet from Judah. God sent the prophet at the time when Jeroboam was offering the incense sacrifice as the heathen kings did. While Jeroboam was offering the sacrifice, the prophet stood up and prophesied that King Josiah from Judah would defile that altar by burning the bones of the priests who had served at the Bethel altar. As a sign from God, the altar was now going to split open and the ashes would pour out. When Jeroboam heard this, he pointed to the prophet with his arm extended ordering his arrest. His extended arm suddenly withered and became like a stick. The altar split open and the ashes poured out. Jeroboam humbly asked the prophet to pray to His God to restore his arm. The prophet did so, and the arm was healed.

Sometime later, God spoke to Jeroboam when his son, Abijah, became ill. Jeroboam sent his wife to Ahijah, the prophet, to see whether his son would live or die. Ahijah told her that because Jeroboam had gone contrary to God, God was going to wipe out the entire family of Jeroboam. Whoever was related to Jeroboam and died in the country, the birds would eat. Whoever died in the city, the dogs would eat. As for Abijah, their son, he would be buried in honor, since he was the only one in the family in whom faith was found. He told Jeroboam's wife that as soon as her feet crossed the entrance to her house, Abijah would die. Jeroboam was to know that God was going to take the ten tribes which he ruled over and scatter them in captivity because Jeroboam had sinned and made Israel sin. In this judgment of God, the future of the ten tribes of Israel was set.

Jeroboam did not change. In his eighteenth year as king, he went to war against King Abijah of Judah with eight hundred thousand men. Abijah had only four hundred thousand men. God was with Judah in the battle and five hundred thousand of Jeroboam's men were killed. Jeroboam never recovered strength after this battle. In his twenty-second year as king, God ended his life. Nadab, his son, became king.

The evil begun by Jeroboam grew in the next kings. Nadab, son of Jeroboam, was as evil as his father and reigned for only two years. He was assassinated by Baasha who then killed all related to Jeroboam. God sent the prophet Jehu to Baasha to tell him that since he was evil like Jeroboam, the curse of Jeroboam would rest on him, also. The dogs would eat those related to him who died in the city and the birds would eat those related to him who died in the country. God permitted Baasha to reign for twenty-four years.

After Baasha died, Elah, his son became king. Elah reigned only two years, and was assassinated by Zimri. Zimri killed all who were related to Baasha. The army appointed Omri, their general, to be king. He took the army to the palace of Zimri. When Zimri saw Omri taking the city, he set the palace on fire and died in it. He had ruled for only seven days.

- The Northern Ten Tribes rebelled against Rehoboam, king of Judah, as God had foretold.
- The Kingdom was divided. The Northern Ten Tribes were now called Israel.
- The Southern two tribes, Benjamin and Judah, were now called Judah.
- Jeroboam, king of the Ten Northern Tribes, was an evil king setting up idol worship of the golden calf in Bethel and Dan.
- Jeroboam's army was defeated by King Abijah of Judah.
- Jeroboam ruled for twenty two years.
- As was foretold in prophecy, because of Jeroboam's evil, his entire family would be wiped out.
- Nadab, Baasha, Elah, and Zimri were all evil kings.

EVIL KING AHAB – ELIJAH, THE PROPHET

1 Kings 15-17



Omri was an evil king but very capable. His greatest claim to fame is that he made Samaria the capital of Israel. He, also, made an alliance with Phoenicia by having his son, Ahab, marry Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Sidon. She was a fanatic worshiper of Baal, Sidon's god of the sun, light, and life. The goddess wife of Baal was Asherah. Jezebel caused Ahab to build a temple for Baal and to, also, worship Baal. There finally were eight hundred and fifty priests of Baal in Samaria. Ahab, with the help of Jezebel, became one the worst of all the kings in the Northern Ten Tribes of Israel, ruling from 874 to 853 B.C.

During Ahab's reign, he had Hiel rebuild the city of Jericho. As Joshua had foretold, Hiel's oldest son died when he laid the foundation of Jericho, and his youngest son died when he set up the gate.

Jezebel, Ahab's wife, hated the God of Israel. When schools were set up for the training of young men to become prophets who would teach the people of the true God, she closed the schools and began killing those she could find. Many of these young men were hidden in a cave and fed with bread and water by Obadiah, Ahab's governor.

At this time, God caused Elijah, the prophet, to oppose and stop Ahab and Jezebel. Elijah, meaning, "my God is Jehovah," fearlessly proclaimed God's will. He told Ahab that because of his idolatry, there would be a famine. Elijah said there would be no dew or rain in the coming years until he announced it. God then told Elijah to go and hide by the brook Cherith, where he would have water to drink. God sent ravens or crows to him with bread and meat in the evening and morning. The food undoubtedly came from the markets in the villages.

When the stream dried up, God sent Elijah to the town of Zarephath in Sidon, Jezebel's homeland. God said that he was to stay in the house of a widow who had a son. When Elijah arrived there, the widow was gathering sticks to cook a last meal for herself and her son. Elijah asked her for some water to drink. As she was going to get it, he asked her to bring him a piece of bread to eat. She looked at him and said that she was gathering sticks to build a fire to cook a last meal for herself and her son and then they would die. Elijah told her that the God of Israel said that the barrel of flour and the container of cooking oil would never be used up till He would send rain again on the earth. She believed Elijah. She, her son, and Elijah were never able to use up the flour or the oil throughout the famine, as God had promised.

After Elijah had been there for some time, the son became sick and died. The widow in her sadness asked Elijah why he had come. Was it to punish her for her sins and then kill her son? Elijah asked for her son, took him to the place where he slept, and laid him on his bed. He stretched himself over the child three times and prayed God to restore his life. God granted his prayer and the son returned to life. Elijah took the child to his mother and said, "See, your son is living." The woman joyfully said, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth."

After a while God told Elijah to go to meet Ahab, because He was going to send rain on the earth. Since the famine was very bad, Ahab and Obadiah had gone in different directions searching for some pasture land for their royal animals. Suddenly Obadiah met Elijah and fell on his face before him, saying, "Are you really my lord, Elijah?" Elijah answered, "I am. Go and tell Ahab, that Elijah is here." Obadiah was frightened and said, "What have I done that you would deliver me to Ahab to kill me? As the Lord your God lives, Ahab has looked everywhere for you. Now you tell me to go to Ahab and say, 'Behold, Elijah is here.' As soon as I do this, the spirit of God will carry you away, where I do not know. When I come and tell Ahab and he cannot find you, he will kill me. I have feared the Lord from the days of my youth. Didn't you know that when Jezebel was killing the prophets of the Lord, I hid one hundred men of the prophets in a cave and fed them with bread and water?"

Elijah replied, "As the Lord of Hosts lives, I will see Ahab today." Obadiah left and told Ahab that Elijah was waiting to see him. Ahab immediately went to meet Elijah.

- Ahab, son of Omri, and Jezebel, wife of Ahab, were very evil.
- Elijah told Ahab there would be no rain or dew until he announced it.
- The ravens brought Elijah bread and meat while he stayed by the brook Cherith.
- While Elijah stayed with the widow of Zarepheth, the oil and flour was not used up. This miracle provided food for the widow, her son, and Elijah.
- God answered Elijah's prayer and the widow's son was brought back to life.
- Elijah told Obadiah that he wanted to see Ahab.

ELIJAH AND THE PROPHETS OF BAAL

1 Kings 18, 19



When Ahab came to Elijah, he said, “Is it you, you troubler of Israel?” Elijah replied, “I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father’s family have. You have not followed the Word of God, but you have followed Baal. Call all Israel to meet me at Mt. Carmel, including the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal’s temple and the four hundred prophets who eat at Jezebel’s table.” Ahab ordered the people and Baal’s prophets to gather at Mt. Carmel, however, Jezebel’s four

hundred prophets did not come.

When all had come to Mt. Carmel, Elijah spoke to them and said that he was the only prophet of the God of Israel left. He said that some of the people believed Baal was god, and some believed that the God of Israel was God. Who was the true God? One bullock was to be prepared by the prophets of Baal. The sacrificial pieces of the bullock were to be laid on the wood on the altar without any fire under them. Elijah would do the same. The God who answered by fire would be the true God. All agreed to the contest.

Since Baal was thought to be the god of the sun and the lord of life, it was felt that he certainly should be able to answer the prayers of the prophets with fire. They began praying and calling on Baal in the morning, yet by noon there was no fire. Elijah called out to the prophets of Baal that they should call a little louder, perhaps Baal was talking to other gods, or hunting, or on a trip, or maybe even sleeping. The prophets of Baal called louder, even jumping on the altar and cutting themselves trying to get Baal to answer with fire. By the time of the evening sacrifice, about 3:00 p.m., there still was no fire.

Elijah then called to the people to come near him. He built an altar with twelve stones for the tribes of Israel and dug a trench around the altar. He prepared the bullock and laid the pieces on the wood, and had barrels of water poured over the sacrifice and the wood on the stone altar until the trench around the altar was filled with water. Elijah then came before the altar and prayed, asking God to show His divine power and send fire, that the people might know that He alone was God and that Elijah was His prophet who had done all these things at God’s command. God suddenly sent fire which burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, and the water in the trench. The people fell on their faces and shouted, “The Lord, He is the God, The Lord, He is the God.” Elijah told the people to capture all the prophets of Baal, and he had them killed.

Elijah then told Ahab to eat and drink for there was the sound of heavy rain. Elijah went up to the top of Mt. Carmel and put his face between his knees and prayed. He told his servant to look out over the ocean and tell him if he saw something special there. Six

times the servant reported seeing nothing. The seventh time, he saw a black cloud shaped like a man's hand rising out of the water. Elijah told his servant to go to Ahab and tell him to get in his chariot and go home for it was going to rain. Very quickly the sky grew black, and it started raining. Ahab rode through the rain in his chariot, and Elijah, strengthened by God, ran in front of Ahab's chariot the fifteen miles to Jezreel.

Elijah was happy with this great victory and full of hope that things would now be different. His hopes were crushed when a messenger came to him from Jezebel. In the message, she swore by the gods that they could punish her if by that time the next day Elijah would not be as dead as the prophets of Baal he had killed.

Together with his servant, he left Jezreel under the cover of darkness and fled to Beersheba in Judah. Leaving his servant there, he went on a day's journey into the desert. There he sat down under a Juniper tree and asked God to let him die, for as the prophets before him, he had not succeeded in stopping idolatry and evil among God's people. He fell asleep, but was suddenly awakened by an angel touching him and telling him to get up and eat. He looked around and saw a cake of bread baked on a fire and a jug of water. He ate and drank, laid down, and slept again. The angel awakened him once more and told him to eat and drink again because he would need it for the long journey ahead of him. Strengthened by the food the angel had given him, he walked for the next forty days and nights until he came to a cave at Mt. Sinai.

- Ahab called the people and Baal's prophets to come to a contest at Mt. Carmel.
- The prophets of Baal prepared their sacrifice and called on Baal to send fire.
- Baal did not send fire.
- Elijah prepared the sacrifice and poured water over it.
- The God of Israel sent fire which burned up the sacrifice, wood, altar and water.
- All the people confessed, "The Lord is God." The prophets of Baal were killed.
- When God sent rain, Elijah ran ahead of Ahab's chariot to Jezreel.
- Jezebel swore to kill Elijah.
- Elijah, strengthened with food from an angel, fled to Mt. Sinai.

ELIJAH HEARS GOD'S STILL, SMALL VOICE

1 Kings 19, 20



The Word of the Lord, (the Angel of the Lord as the Divine Word), came to Elijah in the cave at Mt. Sinai and said, “What are you doing here?” Elijah replied, “I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty, because the children of Israel have forsaken your Covenant, torn down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left and they are trying to kill me.” Then the Word of the Lord said to Elijah, “Go and stand on the mountain before the Lord. A strong wind tore into the mountain and broke the rock in pieces, but the Lord was not in the wind.

After the wind, came an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake, came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. After the fire, came a still small voice.

When Elijah heard God’s voice, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. God asked him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” Elijah answered, “I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty because the children of Israel have forsaken your Covenant, torn down your altars, and have killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are trying to kill me.”

Then the Lord said to him, “Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. When you arrive, anoint Hazael, king over Syria and anoint Jehu, the son of Nimshi, king over Israel, and Elisha to succeed you. Whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill, and whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill. Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him.”

On his journey back, Elijah found Elisha plowing with twelve pair of oxen. Elisha was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah passed by him and threw his cloak on him. Elisha left the oxen and ran after Elijah. He asked for permission to kiss his parents goodbye before following Elijah. Elijah told him that he was free to do so. Elisha took his yoke of oxen, killed them, and prepared a meal for his household with the wood from the plow. He then followed Elijah and served him.

Meanwhile, Ben-Hadad II of Syria joined together with thirty-two kings, including their horses and chariots. When they had surrounded Samaria, Ben-Hadad II sent a message to Ahab saying, “Your silver and gold are mine and the best of your wives and children are mine.” Ahab agreed. Then Ben-Hadad II sent another message saying he would come into Samaria and loot it. Ahab consulted with his officials and sent a message back

refusing to grant Ben-Hadad II his request. Ben-Hadad II ordered his army to attack Samaria and told Ahab that he would reduce it to dust. Ahab sent back a message saying that the one who takes off his armor after a battle can boast, but not the one who puts his armor on before the battle.

A prophet came to Ahab and said that the God of Israel would help Ahab defeat Ben-Hadad II and his army. By this Ahab would know that the God of Israel was the only God. Ahab asked for God's directions and attacked Ben-Hadad II and his army while they were drinking before the battle. He defeated Ben-Hadad II and forced him to flee, but Ahab did not turn to God or thank Him for the victory.

After the battle, the prophet told Ahab to prepare to fight again in spring because Ben-Hadad would return. Ben-Hadad's II advisors told him that the Israelite God was a God of the hills, not of the plain, therefore, they should attack on the plains the next time.

In spring, Ben-Hadad II returned as the prophet had said. The Israelite army was very small compared to the Syrian army. The prophet told Ahab that God would grant the victory to Israel, because the Syrians had belittled God saying that He had power in the hills but not on the plains. By this victory, Ahab would know that the Lord God of Israel was God alone. Israel killed one hundred thousand warriors in one day. The rest fled into the city where the city wall fell on twenty seven thousand more men. Ben-Hadad II, hiding in a house in the city, sent a message to Ahab asking for peace. Ahab not only granted peace, he called Ben-Hadad II his brother, took him up in his chariot and as a condition of peace, set up a trade center in Damascus, the capitol city of Syria.

When Ahab did this, God had a prophet go to Ahab. The prophet said, "God says this, 'Because you let a man escape who was to be killed, God will take your life for his life and your people for his people'." Sullen and angry, Ahab returned to his palace.

- Elijah fled for his life to a cave in Mt. Sinai.
- God did not come to Elijah in power, but in a still, small voice.
- God chose Elisha to succeed Elijah.
- Ben-Hadad's Syrian army was defeated twice by Ahab.
- Ahab foolishly kept Ben-Hadad alive and was judged by God.

NABOTH'S VINEYARD

1 Kings 21, 22



away, and refused to eat.

Ahab decided that he wanted to have a herb or vegetable garden just outside his palace on land owned by Naboth. Naboth was a devout man who tried to live according to God's Word. This land was his inheritance from his fathers, first given five hundred years earlier when Israel conquered the land of Canaan. God had commanded His people to never sell their inheritance. Ahab went to Naboth and offered him money for the land or a trade for a better piece of land. Naboth refused to trade or sell. Ahab went home, lay on his bed with his face turned

Jezebel, his wife, came to see why Ahab would not eat. When she was told about Naboth's vineyard, she told Ahab that she would get it for him. She wrote a letter in Ahab's name, sealed with his seal, and sent it to the rulers of the city. The letter instructed the men to accuse Naboth of blaspheming or speaking against God and the king. The officials were told to get two false witnesses who would support the accusation. The penalty for blaspheming God and the king was death by stoning. When the officials notified Jezebel that Naboth and his sons were dead, it made it legal for the king to take the land as now there were no heirs. Jezebel went to Ahab and told him that the vineyard was now his.

God told Elijah what had taken place and sent Elijah to meet Ahab at the vineyard. When Ahab saw Elijah, he said, "So you have found me, my enemy!" "I have found you," Elijah answered. "The Lord says, 'because you have sold yourself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord, I am going to bring disaster on you. All your descendants will die. I will make your house like that of Jeroboam and Baasha because you have provoked Me to anger and have caused Israel to sin. Dogs will eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. Dogs will eat those belonging to Ahab who die in the city, and the birds of the air will eat those who die in the country.'"

Ahab wanted to go to war with Syria and reclaim the city of Ramoth-Gilead. At that time, King Jehoshaphat of Judah and Ahab had formed a close relationship. When Jehoshaphat came to visit Ahab, Ahab asked Jehoshaphat to join him in war to recapture the city of Ramoth-Gilead from Syria. Jehoshaphat agreed to join Ahab in the battle. However, he asked Ahab to ask God if it had His blessing. Ahab called together a group of about four hundred prophets. It seems from the number that these could have been Jezebel's four hundred prophets who did not come to the contest with Elijah. Ahab asked them if he should go to war for Ramoth-Gilead. They told him to go, and God would give them the victory. Jehoshaphat was not satisfied with these men and asked if there was not a prophet of the Lord they could ask.

Ahab said there was one called Micaiah, but he never prophesied anything good for him. The man that Ahab sent to get Micaiah told Micaiah to be like all the other prophets and tell Ahab what he wanted to hear to avoid upsetting him. Micaiah said that he would say what God would tell him to say. When he came before the kings, Ahab asked Micaiah whether they should go to war. Micaiah told Ahab to go and be successful. Ahab said to Micaiah, "How many times shall I command you to tell me only what is true in the name of the Lord?" Micaiah replied, "I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills as sheep that have no shepherd. Let every man return to his house in peace." In other words, Micaiah told Ahab that he would die in the battle. Ahab told Jehoshaphat, "See, he never says anything good."

Ahab ordered Micaiah to be put in prison until he would safely return. Micaiah spoke so all could hear, "If you return at all in peace, God has not spoken by me. Everyone listen to what I am saying."

Ahab and Jehoshaphat went to war, but Ahab disguised himself and let Jehoshaphat wear his kingly armor and robe. The Syrians had been ordered to only fight against Ahab. When they saw that Jehoshaphat was not Ahab, God caused them to turn away. One of the Syrian archers took a chance on an Israelite warrior being Ahab, and hit him with an arrow. Ahab stayed in his chariot until evening and then died. When they brought him to Samaria, they washed out his chariot and the dogs licked up Ahab's blood, as God had foretold.

- Ahab wanted Naboth's vineyard.
- Jezebel got the vineyard for King Ahab by having Naboth and his sons stoned on a false accusation of blasphemy against God and the king.
- Micaiah, the prophet, told Ahab that he would be killed in battle with the Syrians.
- Ahab was killed by an archer. Dogs licked up his blood when the chariot was washed out as foretold by Elijah, the prophet.

ELIJAH TAKEN TO HEAVEN IN THE FIERY CHARIOT 2 Kings 1, 2



When Ahab died, his son Ahaziah, came to the throne. One day Ahaziah was severely injured when he fell through a lattice in his upper room. He sent messengers to Ekron, a Philistines city, to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of flies, whether he would recover. The Angel of the Lord told Elijah to meet the men and ask them, “Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to consult Baal-Zebub? Go back and tell the

king he will not get out of bed. He will surely die.”

The men turned back and told the message to Ahaziah. He asked them to describe the man they had met. They said that he had a big leather belt. Ahaziah said that it was Elijah. Ahaziah sent fifty men to arrest Elijah. The first group found Elijah sitting on the top of a hill. The captain commanded Elijah saying, “You, man of God, the king has said, ‘Come down.’” Elijah replied, “If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty.” God sent fire from heaven and burned up all the men.

Ahaziah sent a second group of fifty men. The captain said to Elijah, “Oh man of God, this is what the king says, ‘Come down.’” Elijah replied, “If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty.” Again God sent fire from heaven and burned up the men.

Ahaziah sent a third captain and his fifty. When he saw the one hundred and two burned men, he was terribly afraid. He went up the hill, and knelt before Elijah and said, “Oh man of God, I pray you let my life and the lives of these fifty be precious in your sight.” The Angel of the Lord told Elijah, “Go down. Don’t be afraid of him.” Elijah got up and went with the captain and the fifty to see Ahaziah, the king.

When Elijah came to the bedside of Ahaziah, he said, “This is what the Lord says: ‘Is it because there is no God in Israel that you have sent messengers to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? Because you have done this, you will never leave your bed. You will die!’” Ahaziah died having ruled only one year. Since Ahaziah had no son, his brother, Jehoram, became king, reigning for eleven years. Jehoram was not as evil as Ahab.

It seems that in Jehoram’s first year, Elijah’s long and remarkable ministry came to an end. The persecution of the prophets had stopped, there were schools for the prophets, and Baal worship had been cut down. God through Elijah had been glorified, and His prophets were once more held in honor.

Elijah knew that he would soon be taken to heaven, so he made a last visit to the schools of the prophets at Bethel and Jericho. Strangely, Elisha and the students, also, knew what was soon to happen. Elijah told Elisha to stay at the schools, but Elisha said that he would not leave Elijah. Elijah said that God was sending him to the Jordan River. Fifty of the students followed and watched as Elijah and Elisha came to the river. Elijah took his mantle, folded it, and hit the water with it. The water parted, and they crossed over on dry ground.

Elijah turned to Elisha and said, "Ask what I should do for you, before I am taken away from you." Elisha replied, "I pray you, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me." Elijah said, "What you have asked is hard for me to grant, but if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be as you asked. If you do not see me, it will not be so."

As they talked, suddenly a chariot of fire drawn by horses of fire parted them, and Elijah went up to heaven in the whirlwind. Elisha saw it, and cried out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." He took his robe and tore it as a sign of grief. Then he picked up Elijah's mantle which had fallen from Elijah and went back to the Jordan River. He took the mantle, folded it and said, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" When he hit the water, the water parted and he walked over on dry ground. When the students saw this, they said, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha."

The students came to meet him, and bowed in respect and honor. They asked that fifty of them be permitted to go and look for Elijah. They felt that God's Spirit would drop Elijah's body in some remote place, and he needed to be found and buried. Elisha said, "No," but they insisted until Elisha allowed it. When they had searched for three days, and had found nothing, they returned. Elisha said, "Didn't I tell you not to go?"

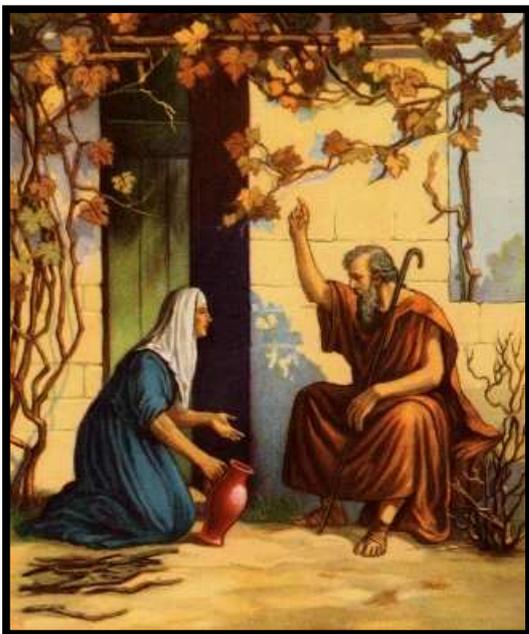
They returned to Jericho. At Jericho there was a spring of water, but the water was undrinkable and the ground around it was barren. Elisha asked for a new jar with some salt in it. He took the jar, poured the salt in the water and said, "Thus says the Lord, 'I have healed these waters. There will no longer be death or barren land.'" Since that time, the spring has been good and is still so today. It is called Elisha's spring.

Elisha left Jericho to go to Bethel. On the way he was mocked and taunted by children. They called out, "Go up, go up, you bald-head." They were saying, "Go up to heaven, you bald-head," showing disrespect for God's prophet. Elisha turned and cursed them in the name of the Lord. When he did so, two female bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the children.

- Ahaziah sent messengers to inquire of Baal-Zebub if he would live or die.
- Ahaziah sent three groups of fifty men to bring Elijah to him.
- God sent fire from heaven and burned up the first two groups of fifty men.
- Elijah went with the third group and told Ahaziah that he would die.
- Elijah was taken to heaven by a chariot of fire in a whirlwind.
- Elisha received a double portion of Elijah's spirit.
- God punished the children who dishonored Elisha.

ELISHA'S MIRACLES

2 Kings 3, 4



After the death of Ahab, Moab rebelled against Israel to whom it had been paying tribute. Jehoram asked Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, and the king of Edom to help him. The three allies joined forces against Moab. To get to Moab, they chose to cross the desert. The way was very difficult, and they ran out of water. Jehoram blamed the God of Judah, but Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there no prophet of the Lord here?" When he was told that Elisha was not far away, the kings went to Elisha. God spoke to Elisha and told him to tell the kings that they should dig ditches because water would come and fill the valley. There would be plenty of water for the army, the animals, and the cattle brought along for food. In addition, God would grant victory to them. The next day it did not rain, but the ditches were flowing with water. In the

battle, the Moabites were severely beaten.

Elisha helped both the great and the small. One day, a widow of one of the prophets begged Elisha to help her. She was deeply in debt, and the man who had loaned the family the money was going to come and take her two sons as his slaves. Elisha asked how he could help her. "What do you have in the house of value?" The widow said that all she had was a jar of cooking oil, probably olive oil. Elisha told her to go to all her neighbors and borrow as many jars as possible. She began to fill all the jars with the oil. She poured and poured, filling every jar. She told her sons to get more jars, but they said that there were no more. Then the oil stopped flowing. When she hurried to tell Elisha, he told her to sell the oil, pay her debt, and live on the rest.

Elisha had a circuit that he seemed to follow regularly. His journey took him by the house of a leading woman of Shunem. One day as he was passing by, the Shunamite woman stopped him and invited him to eat and have a time of rest. After that, he stopped regularly at her house. Noting this, the Shunamite woman said to her husband, "I know this man is a man of God. Let us make a little room on the roof of the house and furnish it with a bed, table, a stool, and a candle." When Elisha came, he was very pleased. Elisha showed his appreciation by asking her what he could do for her, to speak to the king, the army general, or someone else. She said, "No," that she was content to live among her people. Gehazi, Elisha's servant said that she had no son and her husband was old. Elisha told Gehazi to call her. When she came and stood at the door, Elisha told her that she would have a son. She was overcome and asked that she not be deceived.

As Elisha had foretold, she had a son. When he was a little boy, he ran out to the field at harvest time. Suddenly, he became ill and complained about a terrible headache. His father had one of his servants take the boy home to his mother. She held him on her lap until noon, and then he died. When she saw that he was dead, she carried him to the bed of Elisha, laid him on it, closed the door, and left. She called to her husband and said, "I pray you, send me one of the young men and a donkey that I may go to the man of God and return." He asked, "Why now, it is not the Sabbath nor the Feast of the New Moon." She answered, "It will be well." She told the young man to drive fast and not to slow down unless she would tell him.

They found Elisha at Mt. Carmel. Elisha saw her coming and sent Gehazi to see if all was well. She said to Gehazi, "All is well." When she came before Elisha, she caught hold of his feet and said, "Did I ask you for a son? Didn't I say, don't deceive me?" Then she told him what had happened. Elisha told Gehazi to take his staff, to hurry to her home, not to greet or speak to anyone, and to lay his staff on the boy's face.

The mother said, "As God lives, I will not leave you." Elisha got up and went with her. As they were coming to the house, Gehazi met them and said that the child was still dead. Elisha put them out of his room, closed the door, and prayed to God. He then placed himself over the child, face to face. The child's body became warm. He got up, walked around the room, and stretched himself out over the child again. The child sneezed seven times and opened his eyes. Elisha called Gehazi and told him to call the boy's mother. When she came into the room, Elisha said, "Take up your son." She fell at Elisha's feet, bowed to the ground, then took up her son and went out.

Elisha regularly visited the schools of the prophets. One day he went to the school at Gilgal. It was a time of famine and Elisha told them to cook in the largest pot in which all should put in their food. One of the students collected wild gourds, shredded them, and threw them into the pot. As they began eating, someone recognized the wild gourds which were deadly poisonous. Elisha asked for some flour, threw it in the pot, and told them they could now eat the food because it would not harm them.

On another visit to the school, a man brought twenty barley loaves and some grain. Elisha told them to serve it to a hundred men. The man said that it was not enough for a hundred men. Elisha said that they would all eat, and there would be some left over. What Elisha said came true. There was more than enough and some left over.

Elisha's miracles always helped God's people, and they held him in honor.

- The miracle of the water in the ditches was provided by God without rain.
- The miracle of the oil filling all the jars helped the poor widow with two sons.
- The miracle of bringing back to life the Shunamite's son showed Elisha was a prophet of God.
- The miracle of the poisonous gourds in the pot of food, saved the lives of the prophets at the school.
- The miracle of multiplying the barley loaves to feed a hundred men was like Jesus feeding the 4,000 and 5,000.

ELISHA AND NAAMAN

2 Kings 5



Naaman, a general of the army of King Ben-Hadad II of Syria, was a valiant soldier, highly regarded by the king. A captive young girl from Israel served Naaman's wife. In time, she learned that there was a great fear and sadness in the home. Her master, Naaman, had discovered that he had leprosy for which there was no cure. The Israelite girl told her master's wife that the prophet in Samaria could cure him. Naaman went to Ben-Hadad II and told him what the girl from Israel had said to his wife. Ben-Hadad II said, "Go, and I will send a letter to Jehoram, the king of Israel, saying, "With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy."

Naaman went to Samaria with ten talents of silver, six thousand pieces of gold, and ten expensive changes of clothing. When he presented Ben-Hadad's letter to Jehoram, Jehoram was upset, tore his robe and said, "Am I God that I can kill and make alive, that this king sends a man to me to heal his leprosy? See how he is trying to start a war with me."

News of this quickly spread around the city of Samaria. When Elisha heard what had happened, he sent the king a letter saying, "Why did you tear your robe? Send the man to me so that he may know there is a prophet in Israel." Upon receiving the message, the king sent Naaman to Elisha. Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stopped in front of Elisha's house expecting Elisha to come and perform a public healing. Instead, Elisha sent his servant Gehazi to tell Naaman to wash seven times in the Jordan River.

Naaman turned away in anger. He said, "I thought he would come out, put his hand over the place of leprosy and cure me. The rivers of Damascus are better than all the waters of Israel. Can't I wash in them and be clean?" His soldiers came to him showing great love and honor. They called him father and said, "If the prophet had asked something great, you would have done it gladly. How much better that he only said to you 'wash and be clean.'" Then Naaman went down to the Jordan River and washed seven times. The leprosy vanished, and his skin was fresh and clean, like the skin of a child.

In grateful humility, Naaman went back to Elisha's house. He got out of his chariot and as he did so, Elisha came out to meet him. He looked at Elisha and said humbly, "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel. Let me give you a gift." Elisha said, "As the Lord lives, I will receive nothing." Naaman urged him to take something, but Elisha refused. Naaman then asked Elisha, "Will you give to me as much dirt as two mules can carry? I will build an altar to the God of Israel, for I will never again worship any other gods with burnt offerings or sacrifices. May the Lord please pardon me when I

have to take my master, the king, into the temple of Rimmon and bow there.” Elisha said, “Go in peace.” In other words, “God will pardon you.”

Gehazi decided to get some of the wealth that Naaman wanted to give Elisha, so he ran after Naaman. When Naaman, saw him, he stopped and asked if everything was all right. Gehazi said that everything was all right, but that after Naaman had left, two young men from the school of the prophets had come. Would Naaman be so kind as to give them one talent of silver and two changes of clothing? Naaman was pleased and prepared two bundles of two talents of silver and two changes of clothing. Naaman sent two of his solders to take the gifts to Gehazi’s house.

Gehazi came to Elisha as if nothing had happened. Elisha asked, “Where have you been?” Gehazi lied and said that he had not been anywhere. Elisha said, “Was not my spirit with you when the man got down from his chariot to meet you? Is this the time to take money, or to accept clothes and to become wealthy? Because you have done this, Naaman’s leprosy will cling to you and your descendants.” Then Gehazi left Elisha.

- A captive servant girl from Israel said a prophet from Samaria could heal Naaman’s leprosy.
- Naaman, a general in the army of Ben-Hadad, king of Syria, was sent to Samaria to be cured of his leprosy.
- Jehoram, king of Israel, tore his robe at the request to heal Naaman.
- Naaman was sent to Elisha who told him to wash seven times in the Jordan River.
- Naaman, healed of his leprosy, confessed that the only God is the God of Israel. He took dirt back to his home to build an altar to the true God.
- Gehazi, because of his greed and sin, received the leprosy of Naaman.

ELISHA, GOD'S HELPER TO PEOPLE AND THE NATION

2 Kings 6-8



On one of Elisha's visits to the school of the prophets, he was told that the place had become too small. They asked his permission to go to the Jordan River to cut down trees and build a larger school. Elisha gave his permission and went along. As one of the students was using an ax to chop down a tree, the ax head fell off the handle into the river. The student told Elisha what had happened and that the ax had been borrowed. Elisha asked where it had fallen in the water. He cut down a stick and threw it into the water. Suddenly the ax head came up and it swam to the shore.

At this time, Ben-Hadad II, king of Syria, started fighting Israel again. He tried to plan his camp site so his army could surprise Israel with an attack. Each time he moved, God told Elisha where the Syrian army was and then Elisha would tell the king. In this way, Elisha saved Israel several times from an attack. Ben-Hadad II became furious and thought that there was a traitor in their midst. His officials said that there was no traitor, but that Elisha, the prophet, knew whatever Ben-Hadad was doing, and he would warn Jehoram.

Ben-Hadad II sent spies to locate Elisha. When they reported that he was in Dothan, Ben-Hadad II sent a small army to capture Elisha. They marched to Dothan during the night and surrounded it. When Elisha's servant went outside early in the morning, he saw the Syrian army and was afraid. He went to Elisha and said, "Alas, master, what are we going to do?" Elisha told him not to be afraid because the army guarding them was much larger and more powerful than the Syrian army. Elisha prayed that God would open the eyes of his servant. The Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he saw that the hill the town was built on was covered with horses and chariots of fire.

As the Syrians came to where Elisha was, he prayed that God would blind the whole army. When God blinded them, Elisha went to the commander and said, "This is not the right way. Follow me and I will bring you to the man you are looking for." Elisha led the Syrian army into the city of Samaria. There he said, "Lord, open their eyes that they may see." King Jehoram asked Elisha if they could kill the Syrians. Elisha said, "No, feed them with bread and water and let them go back to Ben-Hadad." This led to a time of peace.

Sometime later, Ben-Hadad II took his entire army and besieged Samaria causing a great famine in the city. Finally the head of a donkey was valued at eighty pieces of silver and small portions of dove or pigeon dung sold for five pieces of silver. Jehoram, the king, felt this trouble was caused by God, and he vowed to behead Elisha that day. Jehoram went to Elisha and said, "This evil is of the Lord." Elisha said, "Listen to the word of God. God says, 'Tomorrow at about this time fine flour will be sold for a shekel and two measures of barley for a shekel at the gate of Samaria.'" One of the officials with the king

said in utter disbelief and mockery, “If God were to open windows in heaven, is this even possible?” Elisha answered, “You will see it, but you will not eat of it.”

Meanwhile, four starving lepers were outside the city gates talking. They said, “If we enter the city, we will die of starvation. If we stay here, we will die of starvation. Let’s go to the Syrian camp. If they will feed us, we will live. If they kill us, we are going to die anyway.” At dusk they went to the Syrian camp and found nobody there. God had caused the Syrian army to hear the approach of a large army. They thought that Jehoram had hired the Hittites and the Egyptians to help them. The whole army ran for their lives leaving tents, supplies, horses, and mules.

The four lepers entered a tent, ate and drank, took silver, gold, and clothing and hid them. They entered another tent and carried away all its valuables, also. Then they agreed that they should give this news to the city of Samaria. They went to the city gates and told the one in charge that the Syrians were gone, leaving their tents, supplies, and animals.

When Jehoram heard this, he said that it was a trap to lure them out of the city. One of his officials said that they should send someone to see what had happened. They only had five horses left, so they took two horses and soldiers and sent them to investigate. They followed the trail of the Syrians all the way to the Jordan River and found the way littered with discarded things. When all this was reported, the people went out and brought in all that was left behind by the Syrian army.

When daylight came, the king placed the mocking official in charge of the sale of food. The people were so desperate to get food that they ran over the official trampling him to death. He saw two measures of barley sold for a shekel and fine flour sold for a shekel, in the gates of Samaria, but he never got to eat any of it. God’s word came true.

In a few short hours, Samaria went from famine to plenty. God’s helping hand could clearly be seen, but God was not glorified. As a judgment, God sent a famine of seven years. Elisha, knowing God’s coming judgment, told the Shunamite woman to move away for seven years. She moved her household to the land of the Philistines for the duration of the famine. At the end of the seven years, she moved back to her land that had been taken over by the king. God prepared for her return by moving Jehoram to have Gehazi come and tell him about Elisha’s miracles. Gehazi, though he was a leper, seemed to have been able to move about freely. Gehazi told the king about the Shunamite woman and how Elisha had brought her son back to life. Just as he was telling the king about this, she and her son came to the king to ask that her home and land be returned to her. When the king heard this, he not only gave her land back but all the income it had brought in during those seven years.

- Elisha caused an ax head to float for a seminary student.
- God sent horses and chariots of fire to protect Elisha from Ben Hadad’s army.
- The Syrian army besieged the city of Samaria causing a famine.
- Four lepers found the Syrian camp deserted and reported it to the city of Samaria.
- The famine was ended by looting the Syrian camp.
- The Shunamite woman went to King Jehoram to get back her home and land.

GOD'S JUDGEMENT ON AHAB AND HIS FAMILY

2 Kings 9, 10, 13, 14



Toward the end of the famine, Elisha carried out a task which God had told Elijah about in prophecy. Hazael, the Syrian official, who served as Ben Hadad's general, was to be anointed king of Syria to succeed Ben Hadad. God here shows that He controls the destiny of not only people but also nations. When God was ready to have Hazael rule, God sent Elisha to Damascus to anoint him king of Syria.

When Elisha arrived in Damascus, Ben-Hadad II was told that the man of God had come. He ordered Hazael to take Elisha a gift and ask him if he would recover from his illness. Hazael brought a gift of forty camels loaded with the best goods of Damascus. Hazael asked Elisha whether Ben-Hadad would recover from his illness. Elisha said that Ben Hadad would recover, however, he would surely die. Hazael returned to Ben-Hadad and told him that Elisha said that he would recover from his illness. The next day Hazael took a thick cloth soaked in water and held it over Ben-Hadad's face until he died. As God had said, Hazael became the next king of Syria.

In his twelfth year as king of Israel, Jehoram went to war against Syria. He was joined in battle by Ahaziah, king of Judah. Jehoram was wounded in the battle and returned to his home in Jezreel to recover. Ahaziah returned to Jerusalem.

God moved Elisha to send a son of a prophet with a container of anointing oil to find Jehu. He found Jehu and poured the oil on his head saying, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel, I have anointed you king over the people of the Lord. You shall kill those in the house of Ahab. The whole house of Ahab shall die. I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam and like the house of Baasha. The dogs shall eat Jezebel in Jezreel." Jehu's officers declared Jehu to be king of Israel.

Jehu drove to Jezreel with his men. The watchmen on the wall of Jezreel saw them coming and reported it. Jehoram ordered a rider to be sent out to see if he was coming in peace. Twice they sent out a rider, but Jehu ordered each to fall in line with his men. The watchman reported this and said that the driver of the chariot was like that of Jehu who was known to drive furiously. At this time, Ahaziah had gone to visit Jehoram, so both of them got in their chariots and went out to meet Jehu. Jehoram asked Jehu. "Is it peace?" Jehu answered, "How can it be peace with the idolatry of your mother, Jezebel?"

Jehoram told Ahaziah that it was treachery. He turned his chariot to flee, but Jehu killed him with an arrow. Jehu told his captain to throw Jehoram's body in Naboth's field. When Ahaziah saw this, he tried to flee, but Jehu's men caught up to him and wounded him. He fled to Meggido where he died.

Jehu rode on to the palace. By now, Jezebel had heard what Jehu had done. She put on her make-up, fixed her hair, and then looked out the window. Jehu said, "Who is on my side?" He said to the men looking out, "Throw her down." So they threw Jezebel down and Jehu's horse rode over her. When Jehu later came out, he found only her skull, feet and hands. He said, "This is the word of the Lord, which He spoke by His servant Elijah. 'Dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel.'"

God had commanded Jehu to wipe out Ahab's family and all trace of Ahab's ungodly reign. After Jehu had killed Ahab's son, Jehoram, and Jezebel, he had Ahab's seventy sons and all of Ahab's relatives and officials killed. He went to Samaria as the new king. There he met the relatives of Ahaziah of Judah who had come for a visit. He had all forty-two of them captured and killed. Thus he completely wiped out all who had a blood or official connection to Ahab. Jehu pointed out to the people that God had brought this judgment on the house of Ahab as He had prophesied through Elijah.

Jehu then proclaimed that he was going to serve Baal more fully than Ahab and Jezebel. He called for every priest and follower of Baal to attend a sacrificial service in the huge Baal temple in Samaria. Any followers of Baal who did not attend would be killed. The temple was crowded with people. Jehu ordered them to make sure no believers in the true God of Israel were present. He told the priest to give each worshipper a worship robe. When Jehu had ended offering the sacrifices and burnt offerings, he met with the eighty soldiers he had chosen. He ordered them to go in and kill every priest and person. If any escaped, they themselves would be killed. In this way, Jehu wiped out Baal worship in Israel. The images of Baal were burned and the temple destroyed.

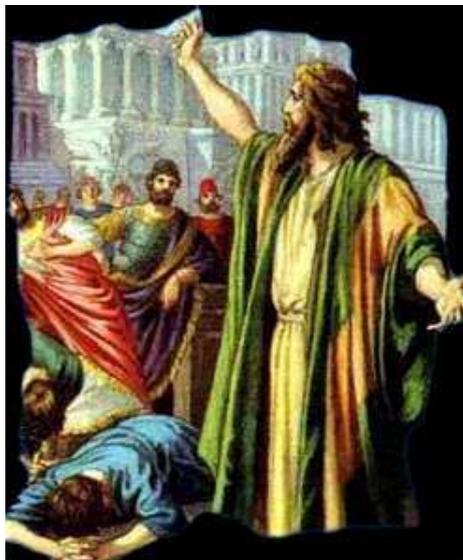
God told Jehu through a prophet that because Jehu had done this, four generations of his descendants would follow Jehu as kings. In spite of God's message of commendation and blessings, Jehu did not fully turn to God, but caused Israel to continue the calf worship. He ruled for twenty-eight years. His son, Jehoahaz, reigned for fifteen years.

The hatred that had existed between Jehu and Hazael of Syria had grown through the years. Hazael took vengeance upon Israel. Jehoahaz bore the full fury of Syria under Hazael, who reduced Israel to fifty calvary, ten chariots, and ten thousand foot soldiers. Jehoahaz was evil, but he prayed and turned to God. In mercy God freed Israel from Syria and stopped the conquering ways of Assyria for a time, thereby bringing peace and a time for Israel to rebuild.

- Elisha was sent to Syria to anoint Hazael king to succeed Ben-Hadad.
- Hazael killed Ben-Hadad and became king of Syria.
- Elisha sent a son of a prophet to anoint Jehu to be king of Israel.
- Jehoram, king of Israel, and Ahaziah, king of Judah, were killed.
- Jezebel was thrown out of the window and eaten by dogs as was foretold.
- Jehu killed all the family of Ahab according to God's judgment.
- Jehu, king of Israel, destroyed Baal worship.
- Because Jehu destroyed Ahab's family and Baal worship, four kings from Jehu's descendants would follow him to the throne.
- God brought about a period of rest from Syria and Assyria.

JONAH, THE PROPHET TO NINEVEH

The Book of Jonah



The nation of Northern Israel was a beaten and battered nation. It was helpless against the Empire of Assyria which had conquered Syria and was extending its brutal and universal power. In a strange way God gave Israel a forty year period of peace from Assyria. At this time there were three prophets in the land, Amos, Hoshea, and Jonah, who was a government official and a prophet.

Jonah hated the Assyrians and wanted their destruction, but suddenly God told him to go to Nineveh, the capitol of Assyria, and preach to them God's message of judgment for unbelief and sin. This Jonah did not want to do. He felt that if he proclaimed God's message, the Assyrian's would repent and God would spare them.

Instead of obeying God, Jonah chose to run away. He bought a ticket on a ship going from Joppa to Tarshish in Spain. After boarding the ship, he went down below deck and went to sleep. God sent a storm which kept getting worse. It got so bad that the sailors prayed to their gods. The captain woke up Jonah and told him to pray to his God. The sailors cast lots to see who was causing the storm. The lot fell on Jonah. Jonah said that he was the one. He told them that he was from Israel and was disobeying a command from God, the Lord of the heavens. They asked him how to calm the storm. Jonah told them to throw him in the sea. The sailors did not want to do this, but the storm became so fierce that they were afraid that the ship would break apart. Finally, praying that God would not hold them guilty of killing Jonah, they threw him into the sea.

As soon as they did this, the storm stopped and the sea became calm. God had a great fish swallow Jonah to save his life. (It was probably a sperm whale as it can crush a row boat in its mouth. During the whaling years of America, there was a sailor who was swallowed by a sperm whale. He was rescued three days later when the whale was killed. He lost his eye-sight but lived to tell his story. Since the whale breathes air, Jonah could live in its stomach.)

God protected him from being digested so that he was not harmed. God ordered the fish to take Jonah to the coast of Israel and spit him out. Jonah did not disobey again, but went straight to Nineveh in obedience to God.

Nineveh was a very large city. Jonah went to its center and began preaching that in forty days God would destroy Nineveh if they did not repent. The people listened and believed Jonah. They repented, fasted, and put on sack cloth. When the message reached their king, he took off his royal robe, put on sack cloth, and sat in dust and ashes. He decreed that no people or animals be given food or drink so that they would all cry out. All were

to put on sack cloth and give up all evil ways and violence. He said, "Who knows, God may show mercy and turn from His fierce anger that we might not perish." When God saw their penitence, He did not bring destruction upon Nineveh.

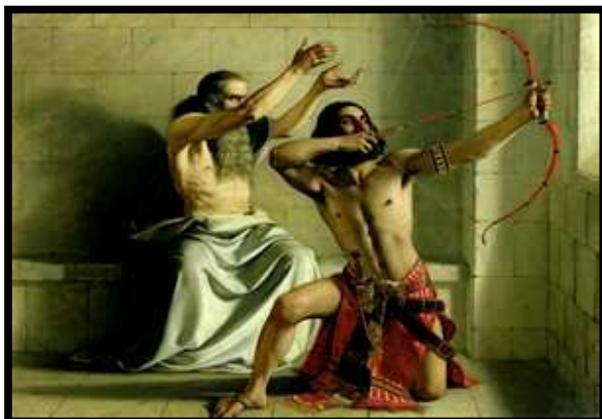
Jonah became very angry and said, "O Lord, this is why I fled to Tarshish, because I knew You are a gracious and compassionate God who relents from sending calamity. Now, O Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live." The Lord said, "Do you have a right to be angry?"

Jonah went out of the city, made a shelter, sat in its shade, and watched what would happen to Nineveh. God had a big vine grow up overnight and shade Jonah from the sun. Jonah was very happy about the vine. Then God had a worm eat the root of the vine and it died overnight. The next day the sun was very hot and a scorching wind blew from the desert. Jonah fainted from sun-stroke. Again he was angry and said, "It is better for me to die than live." But God said to Jonah, "Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?" Jonah replied, "I have a right to be angry enough to die." But the Lord said, "You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand children. Should I not be concerned about that great city?"

Tradition says that Jonah stayed in Nineveh where he died. A tomb there is said to be his tomb.

- God told Jonah to go and preach repentance to Nineveh, a city in Assyria.
- In disobedience, Jonah tried to run away, getting on a ship to Tarshish in Spain.
- God sent a terrible storm which almost destroyed the ship.
- When Jonah was thrown into the sea to calm the storm, he was swallowed by a great fish, possibly a sperm whale.
- After three days, the fish spat Jonah out on land.
- When Jonah preached repentance to Nineveh, the king and the people of Nineveh repented and were spared God's destruction.
- God taught Jonah a lesson about His Divine mercy and love.

THE END OF ISRAEL, THE NORTHERN KINGDOM 2 Kings 13-15



Jehoash succeeded Jehoahaz the son of Jehu and reigned for sixteen years. When Elisha was ill, Jehoash went to see him. Elisha told him to take a bow and some arrows, open an east window and shoot the arrow. Elisha told the king that it was the arrow of deliverance and that he would defeat Syria. Then Elisha told him to take the quiver of arrows and shoot into the ground.

Jehoash shot, but he only did it three times. Elisha said, "If you had shot five or six times, you would have destroyed Syria. Now you will defeat them only three times." As Elisha had said, Jehoash defeated Ben-Hadad III of Syria three times.

Elisha died and was buried. Later, some men had gathered to bury a man. They hurriedly dropped the body in Elisha's grave when they saw some Moabites coming. As soon as the body touched the body of Elisha, the man came back to life.

Because of Israel's unfaithfulness, they had earned God's judgment. Its days were numbered. Yet God showed Israel a time of mercy through Jeroboam II, son of King Jehoash. He was the greatest of the Israelite kings and reigned for forty-one years. It was the final chance for Israel to repent and turn to God. God had caused Assyria to hear Jonah's preaching, to repent, and be at peace for a time. Jeroboam II, however, was an evil king and continued calf worship. Neither he nor Israel repented in spite of God's mercy. They had only a little over thirty years left as a nation before God would wipe them away, as you wipe dirt from a dish. Amos, the prophet, foretold the captivity of Northern Israel.

Jeroboam was succeeded by Zechariah, his son, who ruled for only six months, and was killed by Shallum. Shallum ruled one month and was killed by Menahem. Menahem ruled for ten years and came under heavy tribute to Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria. Menahem's son, Pekahiah, ruled one year and was killed by Pekah.

Pekah, who reigned for twenty years, allied himself with Rezin of Syria to attack Judah. Ahaz, the king of Judah, turned to Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria who defeated both Israel and Syria killing Rezin and Pekah. Hoshea was appointed king over Israel and ruled nine years. When Tiglath-Pileser died, Shalmaneser succeeded him. Hoshea rebelled and Shalmaneser besieged Samaria, the capitol of Israel, for three years. When Shalmaneser died, Sargon, his brother and general, took the throne and completed the destruction of Israel. The Israelites were taken into captivity by Assyria, and scattered.

According to Lev. 26, some were sent to Halah, others in Gozan on the Habar River and others in the towns of the Medes. In this way the Ten Northern Tribes vanished from history.

Colonists from Babylon were sent by the Assyrians to replace the Israelists who were taken away into captivity. When the colonists got there, God sent lions to trouble them. They complained to the king who sent one of the Israelite priests to teach them of the God of Israel. These people became known as the Samaritans.

- The Assyrians defeated Israel and carried them into captivity.
- Northern Israel vanished from history. God's judgment had fallen on Israel, the Ten Northern Tribes.

THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM OF JUDAH

2 Chronicles 13-16

Rehoboam, son of Solomon, was the first king of Judah. He was an evil king reigning for seventeen years. Shishak, Pharaoh of Egypt, attacked Rehoboam and carried off the palace treasures and the three hundred gold shields which Solomon had made. In their place, Rehoboam made bronze shields.

Abijah, a good king, succeeded his father, Rehoboam. He went to war with Jeroboam of Northern Israel. Before the battle, Abijah told the eight hundred thousand army of Jeroboam that they had become unfaithful to God. He warned them that they were fighting against God and they would fail. King Abijah had only four hundred thousand men in his army. When Judah saw that Jeroboam had sent part of his army behind him and that they were surrounded, Abijah's army prayed to God. The priest blew their trumpets, and the men of Judah shouted their battle cry. In the battle, Abijah's army killed five hundred thousand men of Israel. Abijah became a powerful king but reigned only three years.

Asa, son of Abijah, became king. Good King Asa moved against idolatry. He destroyed the altars of foreign gods, smashed their sacred stones, cut down the sacred Asherah poles used in worship, and removed his grandmother, Maachah from being queen. He ordered his nation to be faithful to the God of their fathers and to obey God's Word. In the following ten years of peace, the cities were built up and fortified. The prophet, Iddo, recorded his history.

After the ten years of peace, King Zerah of Cush invaded Judah with an army of about one million men. God answered Asa's prayer for help and the army of Cushites was defeated with heavy losses. Asa repaired the temple and destroyed the idols in the land. He gathered together all the people from the tribes of Ephraim, Benjamin, Judah, Manasseh, and Simeon who had moved to Judah from Israel. He assembled them in Jerusalem and had them take an oath to be faithful to God.

In Asa's thirty-sixth year, Baasha of Northern Israel moved against Judah and fortified Ramah to keep anyone from Judah to leave or enter Judah. Asa took money from the temple treasury and sent it to Ben-Hadad III, king of Syria, to attack Baasha. Ben-Hadad III did and Asa and his army dismantled Ramah. It angered God that Asa did not remember how God had helped him defeat the army of King Zerah, and now he had paid money to Syria for help. God sent Hanani, the prophet, to rebuke Asa. He said Asa had been foolish, that from now on Asa would have wars. Asa was angry and put Hanani in prison. After this, Asa became harsh to some of his people. In his thirty-ninth year, he developed a severe disease in his feet. He did not ask God to help him, but turned to doctors. He died two years later having reigned forty-one years.

- Rehoboam, son of Solomon, was the first king of Judah and was an evil king.
- Abijah, son of Rehoboam, and his son, Asa, were good kings in Judah.
- Idols were destroyed and the people ordered to be faithful to the God of their fathers.

GOOD KING JEHOSEPHAT 2 Chronicles 16, 19, 20

After the death of Asa, his son, Jehoshaphat, became king of Judah reigning for twenty-four years. He sent officials, leaders, and priests to the cities of Judah to teach the people God's Word and remove the heathen worship places. God blessed him and established his kingdom causing the neighboring kingdoms to fear him. Unfortunately, he made friends with the evil king Ahab in Northern Israel and became involved as an ally in the battle where Ahab was killed. God enabled Jehoshaphat to safely return home. Since the people of Judah were being influenced by the faithlessness of Northern Israel, he appointed judges to instruct the people to be honest and faithful to God.

The time came when the Moabites, Ammonites and Edomites joined together to attack Judah. Jehoshaphat led his people in prayer asking God to help them. God sent a prophet to comfort and strengthen His people. He told them not to be afraid, but to watch how God would save them. As Jehoshaphat led his army the next morning, he told them to have faith and to sing hymns of praise to God. When they got to the battle field, there were only dead soldiers. God had caused the Ammonites and Moabites to turn against the Edomites and then against each other. It took three days for the army of Judah to carry away the plunder which included cattle, sheep, horses, camels, donkeys, chariots, food, gold, silver, jewels, weapons, and armor.

Trouble came to Jehoshaphat when he joined with Ahab's son, King Ahaziah of Israel, in building a fleet of ships for trade, wealth, and power. Eliezer, the prophet, told Jehoshaphat that because of his alliance with Ahaziah, God would destroy the fleet. Jehoshaphat died soon after and was succeeded by his son, Jehoram.

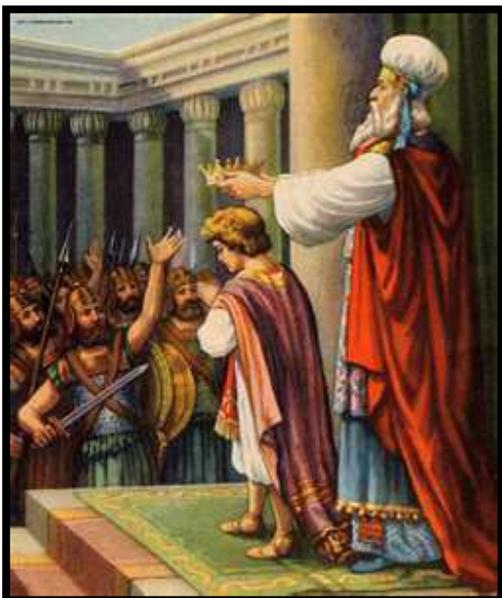
Great harm came to Judah when Jehoram married Athaliah, the wicked daughter of Ahab. She caused Jehoram to kill his brothers and to worship Baal. God dealt with Jehoram in a strange way. Years before, Elijah wrote a prophecy which was now delivered to Jehoram. It read, "Thus says the Lord God, because you have not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat your father, or King Asa, but have walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and have led your people to sin like the house of Ahab, and have killed your brothers, you will have trouble in your household and will die of a terrible disease."

As God had foretold, the Philistines and Arabians rose up against Jehoram, looted the palace, and took away his sons and wives. He died of a terrible disease two years later having reigned eight years. Ahaziah, his son, became king. He was evil, reigning only one year, and was killed by Jehu in Samaria when he was visiting Ahab's family. When Athaliah heard her son was killed, she killed all but one of her grandsons and ruled as queen for six years. This grandson, Joash, was saved by Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram, who hid him.

- Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, married wicked Athaliah, daughter of Ahab.
- After the death of Ahaziah, son of Jehoram, Athaliah became queen for six years.
- Athaliah killed all her grandsons except Joash, who was hidden by the daughter of Jehoram.

KINGS OF JUDAH

2 Chronicles 23-28 2 Kings 11-16



Jehoida, the High Priest, kept little Joash safe. At the age of seven, Jehoida set up his coronation in the temple. When Queen Athaliah came to the temple, she declared that it was treason. She was arrested, taken outside the temple, and killed.

Joash was a good king while Jehoida lived. He had the temple repaired and worship restored. Jehoida died at the age of one hundred thirty and was buried with the kings for the good that he had done. After the death of Jehoida, the officials of Judah persuaded Joash to allow idolatry. God told the prophet, Zechariah, son of Jehoida, to warn them that in forsaking God, God had forsaken them. Joash ordered his death. As Zechariah lay dying he said, "May

the Lord see this and call you to account." The next year, Syria invaded and defeated Judah, looted Jerusalem taking its wealth, and left Joash severely wounded. The officials then had Joash killed in his bed. Joash reigned forty years.

Amaziah, his son, succeeded him and began well, but he became ungodly. When war developed with Edom, God ordered him to send home the soldiers he had hired from Northern Israel to help fight Edom. Amaziah won the battle, however, he took the Edomite idols and began worshiping them. The victory over Edom made Amaziah proud and he insisted on fighting King Jehoash of Israel. Amaziah was badly defeated. Jehoash looted Jerusalem and broke down six hundred feet of its city walls. Fifteen years later, the people rejected Amaziah, and he was killed. He reigned twenty-nine years.

Uzziah, his son, was made king even though he was only sixteen. He had a long godly reign of fifty two years. During his reign, he defeated Judah's enemies under the guidance of the prophet Zechariah. God blessed him and he became great. He fortified the cities of Judah, developed catapults for hurling stones in war, and, also, developed a powerful well trained and equipped army. When he had reigned thirty-nine years, he made his son, Jotham, co-ruler. Two years later, he tried to offer a sacrifice of incense in the temple which was only to be done by the priest. Uzziah became angry when the priests would not let allow him to sacrifice. Suddenly, God made him a leper. Because he was a leper, a small house was built for him where he stayed until he died. He remained king, but Jotham ruled the land.

Jotham became king at twenty five and was a godly king, reigning for twenty years. He spent most of his life as a co-ruler with his father, Uzziah, and then with his evil son, Ahaz. In his reign, Jotham defeated the Ammonites and had a powerful kingdom.

Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign. He was nothing like his godly father, Jotham, or his grandfather, Uzziah. Ahaz was totally evil like the kings of Northern Israel who worshiped Baal. He even offered some of his children as a burnt offering as the heathen did in worshipping Moloch, the god of the Ammonities. On high hills and under every green tree, he offered sacrifices and incense. He was like a heathen religious fanatic.

Syria, under king Rezin, and Northern Israel under King Pekah defeated Ahaz killing one hundred and twenty four thousands soldiers in one day and looted much of Judah. Northern Israel took two hundred thousand captives to Samaria, its capitol. There the prophet, Oded, rebuked Pekah and his army. The captives were fed, clothed, and taken back to Jericho.

Isaiah was the prophet in the palace at this time. He told Ahaz to turn to God. In mock humility, Ahaz said that he would not tempt God. Instead, he sent silver and gold to Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria to come and help him, offering to become a vassal to Assyria. Tiglath-Pileser came and killed King Rezin of Syria. King Pekah of Israel was killed by Hosea who became king by Tiglath-Pileser consent. When Ahaz went up to Damascus to submit to Tiglath-Pileset, he found an altar that he liked. He sent the plans to Urijah, the high priest in Jerusalem, who built a copy of the altar for Ahaz. Ahaz moved the temple altar to another spot, and offered sacrifices on the new altar. He, also, set up altars to heathen gods on every corner of Jerusalem and cut up the sacred vessels of the temple. He changed the religious ceremonies of Judah and finally closed the temple doors. Ahaz brought Judah very low politically and spiritually. He ruled for sixteen years and was not buried with the kings of Judah.

During the reign of Ahaz, the main prophets of the day were Isaiah in the palace and Micah in the country. It was evident that the destruction of Judah was coming in the near future. At such a low spiritual time, Isaiah and Micah spoke the beautiful words recorded concerning the birth of Jesus, the Messiah. Since Jesus was to be born in Bethlehem from the tribe of Judah, Judah would not be destroyed. God had promised that a Savior would come from them and there was no power that could make God's promise of redemption fail.

- Joash became king at age seven and was a godly king while Priest Jehoida lived.
- Amaziah, his son, began well, but was finally killed by his officials.
- Uzziah, his son, was a godly king, followed by Jotham, his son, also a godly king.
- Ahaz, son of Jotham, was an evil king worshipping like the heathen.
- Isaiah, the prophet in the palace, prophesied the birth of Jesus.
- Micah, the prophet in the country, foretold the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.

GOOD KING HEZEKIAH

2 Kings 18-24 2 Chronicles 29-32



When Ahaz died in 728 B.C., he was succeeded by his son, Hezekiah, who was twenty-five years old. He was a very good king. The Bible compared him to King David in his faithfulness. As soon as he was king, he opened the temple doors. He gathered the priests and Levites together and said that the sufferings of Judah were a judgment from God for their unfaithfulness and that Judah must rededicate itself to God and seek His pardon, peace, and blessing. The priests and Levites responded. In eight days they cleansed the temple, made

repairs, restored, and sanctified it for worship and sacrifice.

Hezekiah and his leading officials called for a special Passover. Since the time of King Solomon, there had not been such a joyous Passover Feast and celebration. Their prayers and songs were received by God in heaven and He blessed them. After the Passover, the heathen altars and worship places were destroyed. Hezekiah commanded the people to bring in their tithes for the support of the temple, priests, and Levites. In three months they received so much that store rooms had to be built as more was received than could be used. Hezekiah did that which was right before God and God made him prosper.

In Hezekiah's sixth year, 723 B.C., Shalmaneser V, king of Assyria took Samaria, the capitol city of Israel after a three year siege. After he died, Sargon, his brother and general, became king. He sent the people from Northern Israel into captivity in Halah and Habor by the Gozan River and in the cities of the Medes. While Sargon was occupied with Samaria, Merodach-Baladan, king of Babylon, started a rebellion which Sargon put down in 722 B.C. without conquering Merodach-Baladan because of another rebellion in Babylon. This gave Hezekiah time to gather strength and prepare for a war in the future. He blocked the upper outlet of the Gihon Spring outside of Jerusalem and built the Siloam Tunnel through solid rock to bring underground water into Jerusalem.

In 715 B.C., Hezekiah became seriously ill. God had Isaiah come and tell Hezekiah to prepare to die. Hezekiah prayed that God would heal him. Isaiah left, but had gone just a little distance when God told him to go back and tell Hezekiah that God had heard his prayer and had seen his tears. Isaiah told Hezekiah that he would be well in three days and that he should go to the temple to worship and thank God. God promised Hezekiah that he would give him fifteen more years and save Judah from Assyria for his sake and for the sake of King David.

Hezekiah asked for a sign that this was God's will. Isaiah said that God would make the sun-dial either go back ten degrees or forward ten degrees. Hezekiah chose to have it go back ten degrees. Isaiah told those who attended Hezekiah to place a lump of figs on the boil and Hezekiah would be healed.

News of the miracle of the sun-dial going back ten degrees traveled all the way to Babylon. Merdoch-Baladan sent a delegation with a letter to Hezekiah. Hezekiah showed the delegation all his wealth and power. Isaiah asked Hezekiah what he had shown the delegation. Hezekiah said he had shown them all his wealth. Because he had done this, Isaiah told Hezekiah that everything they had seen would be taken to Babylon plus his sons. This prophesied God's coming judgment. Hezekiah said, "God's word is good. Isn't it good that there will be peace in my days?"

After the death of Sargon, Sennacherib became king in 705 B.C. After defeating Merodach-Baladan and the Medes, he moved against Canaan. He sent a messenger to Hezekiah calling upon him to surrender. Isaiah, the prophet, Hezekiah, and the people prayed for God to help them. Hezekiah sent a message to Sennachrib to name a price for peace. Sennacherib demanded thirty talents of gold and three hundred talents of silver. To meet this, Hezekiah had to strip the gold off the temple doors and the two great entrance pillars. Sennacherib received the gold but prepared to move against Jerusalem anyway. He sent a messenger to speak to the people of Jerusalem in a very evil way, even mocking God. When Hezekiah heard this, he went to the temple to pray. He sent some officials to Isaiah. Isaiah said that they should not be afraid, because God would cause Sennacherib to return home where he would be killed.

God sent the Angel of the Lord to pass over the camp of the Assyrians killing one hundred and eighty-five thousand men. Sennacherib returned home and as he was worshiping in his heathen temple, he was killed by two of his sons.

- Hezekiah succeeded Ahaz and was a very godly king.
- Hezekiah repaired the temple, had the people rededicate themselves, and held a special Passover.
- God heard Hezekiah's prayer and healed him. God gave him fifteen more years as king. In total Hezekiah ruled for 29 years.
- The miracle of the sun-dial moving back ten degrees was given as a sign to Hezekiah.
- Hezekiah prepared for Assyria's attack and brought water into the city by an underground tunnel.
- God preserved Judah from Assyria, sending the Angel of the Lord to destroy the Assyrian army.

THE LAST KINGS OF JUDAH

2 Kings 21-25 2 Chronicles 33-36



Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, was twelve years old when he began to reign and he reigned for fifty-five years. During the first part of his long reign, he was an evil king worshipping many idols and Baal. He built altars for their worship in the two courts of the temple, placed a carved idol in the temple, and practiced black magic. He burned some of his children in gods like Moloch. The Bible says he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood. According to tradition, he had Isaiah, the prophet, sawed in half.

God caused the Assyrian army to attack Jerusalem and capture Manasseh. They put a hook in his nose and took him to a prison in Babylon. There he repented and asked God to forgive him. God answered his prayers by freeing him from prison and restoring him as king in Jerusalem. He was now a believer in the true God. He tore down all the idols and worship centers which he had built and cleansed the temple. He commanded the people to worship the Lord only. The people continued to worship on high hills and at other altars, but they did it in the name of the Lord. When Manasseh died, Amon, his son, came to the throne at the age of twenty-two. He reigned for two years. He was ungodly and was killed by his officials.

Josiah, son of Amon, came to the throne when he was eight years old and reigned thirty one years. The Bible says that he walked in the image of David. When he was sixteen, he destroyed the idols and crushed them to dust. When he was eighteen, he had the temple cleansed and repaired. As they did so, they found the five books of Moses, called the Book of the Law. Josiah had it read and it made him cry. He sent Hilkiah, the high priest, to Hulda the prophetess to know how God felt toward Judah. God had Hulda tell Josiah that God would indeed bring judgment on Judah, however it would come after Josiah's death. In the eighteenth year of his reign, Josiah caused the Passover to be held. Josiah was wounded in a battle with Pharaoh Necho of Egypt and died soon after. The people mourned for him and buried him with his fathers, the kings.

Jehoahaz, his son, was crowned king, but Pharaoh Necho deposed him and took him to Egypt where he died. Pharaoh changed his brother's name from Eliakim to Jehoiakim and made him king. Jehoiakim was totally evil. Jeremiah foretold that he would have the burial of a donkey, meaning that his body would be dragged out to the city dump and left to rot. Jeremiah said that because of Jehoiakim's evil, he should be considered childless. This meant that God had the Messianic line pass from Solomon to his brother, Nathan. Thus Nathan, the son of King David, became the ancestor of Mary, not Solomon.

Jehoiakim was succeeded by his younger brother, Jehoiachin. Jehoiachin was eight years old and reigned for 3 months and ten days. When Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, Jehoiachin with all the royal household and officials went out of the city and gave

themselves up. Nebuchadnezzar appointed Josiah's youngest son Mattaniah king, and changed his name to Zedekiah. At this time, the temple was looted and ten thousand people were carried into captivity. This included Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Ezekiel the prophet, princes, soldiers, and craft-men.

Zedekiah, in the fourth year of his reign, had to go to Babylon and swear to be loyal before Nebuchadnezzar's great image. Zedekiah, an evil king, kept turning to Egypt for help. When he finally rebelled against Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar returned and Jerusalem was taken. Zedekiah was made to watch as his sons were killed and then his eyes were put out. He was taken to Babylon where he died.

All of Israel was now gone because they were not faithful to God and worshiped idols. The Northern Ten Tribes had vanished from history. Now Judah began its seventy year captivity in Babylon. Isaiah had promised that a remnant would return because from Judah the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. Judah had to return for in the city of Jerusalem, Jesus Christ, God's Son, would suffer and die on the cross to forgive the sins of the world and give to all believers everlasting life.

- Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, was an evil king at the beginning of his fifty-five year reign. He was taken to Babylon where he repented and was restored as king.
- Amon, his son, was an evil king reigning for only two years.
- Josiah, Amon's son, was a godly king and walked in the image of David.
- The Book of the Law was found in the temple and Josiah had it read to the people.
- Jehoahaz, son of Josiah, was deposed and taken to Egypt.
- Pharaoh made Jehoiakim king, who was totally evil.
- The Messianic line was removed from the descendants of Solomon, because of Jehoiakim and was transferred to Nathan, another son of David.
- Jehoiachin was followed by Zedekiah, appointed by Nebuchadnezzar.
- Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Ezekiel were carried off to Babylon
- God's judgment fell. Judah began the seventy year captivity in Babylon.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR, KING OF BABYLON

Daniel 2



The empire of Babylon was very important as God used it to prepare His people for the coming of Jesus, the promised Messiah, by cleansing it of Idolatry. Nebuchadnezzar, the great king of Babylon, built Babylon to be one of the greatest cities in the world. It was fifteen miles square with fields in it for food and livestock. The Euphrates River flowed through the city through huge bronze gates. The walls of the city were about three hundred feet high and eighty feet thick, so wide that chariots could pass each other on top of them. Outside the walls the ground was kept bare for a great distance making it a city hard to conquer. Babylon was famous for its hanging gardens watered by hydraulic pumps, making a forest in the air. It was built for his Persian queen. The dining hall of the palace was about a half mile long.

Nebuchadnezzar was a brilliant and religious man, a heathen at first, but in a strange way he came to know and believe in the true God. He was allied with the Medes. The Magi at his time were the most learned people on earth. It was to Babylon that Judah was brought in their seventy year captivity. Among the young men who were brought as captives were Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Daniel, and the prophet Ezekiel. Ezekiel became God's prophet living in the country with the captive people from Judah.

When Daniel and his three friends came to Babylon, they were selected for special training for three years for high ranking positions in the government. Their Jewish names were changed to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Daniel's name was changed to Beltshazzar, but he was still called by the name of Daniel. They were to be fed the royal diet, but refused asking for only vegetables and water. After a ten day trial period, they looked healthier than those eating the royal diet. God blessed these young men. When the three years were up, Nebuchadnezzar found them ten times better than his wise men.

In his second year as king, God sent Nebuchadnezzar a special dream. When he woke up, he knew the dream was important. He called for all his wise men demanding that they tell him both the dream and its meaning, or they would be put to death. Daniel asked for time, and he and his three friends prayed asking God to tell them the dream and the meaning. God revealed it to Daniel, and he was taken to the king. When asked whether he could tell the dream and its meaning, Daniel said only the true God can give the dream and its meaning.

Then Daniel told the king that before he had fallen asleep he was wondering what kingdom would follow his in the future. "In your dream God set before you a great statue or image of a man. Its head was of gold, chest and arms of silver, its stomach and thighs of brass and its legs of iron and its feet of iron and clay mixed. It stood before a mountain. Suddenly, without hands, a stone was cut out of the mountain and it began rolling toward the image. It fell on the feet of the image and crushed them. It then went

on to crush the entire image. A wind blew the dust away, but the stone kept growing until it became a great mountain and filled the entire earth.”

Daniel said, “This is the meaning of your dream. Nebuchadnezzar, you are the head of gold, the ruler over all. After you will come a cheaper and larger kingdom of silver. After it there will arise a still larger but cheaper kingdom of brass. Finally, there will arise a larger and cheaper kingdom of iron and ruler of all. But it will become divided because its feet were of iron and clay. As you watched, a Stone was cut out of a mountain without hands. It rolled toward the image and landed on its feet crushing the entire image to dust which the wind carried away. Then the Stone grew into a huge mountain and filled the whole earth. In the days of this last kingdom, God will set up an everlasting Kingdom. You saw that the Stone was cut out of rock without human hands and that it crushed the image. You wondered what kingdom would follow yours to the end of time. The great God has made it known to you.” (The Stone pointed to the coming of Jesus as the Divine Rock coming as the Savior and Eternal King of all, whose Kingdom will never end.)

Nebuchadnezzar bowed before Daniel upon hearing the dream and the meaning. He made Daniel prime minister and president of all his wise men. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were set over the provinces of Babylon.

- King Nebuchadnezzar built the great city of Babylon.
- Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were brought to Babylon and given special training for high government positions.
- Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar his dream and the meaning.
- The great image represented the kingdoms which would be destroyed by the Stone, God’s everlasting Kingdom. The Stone pointed to Jesus as the Divine Rock coming as the Savior and Everlasting King.

SHADRACH, MESHACH, & ABEDNEGO IN THE FIERY FURNACE

Daniel 3



During the seventy year captivity in Babylon, God preserved and cleansed His people of idolatry. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, being high ranking officials, were in position to protect God's people through the laws and the governing of the king.

To stabilize his powerful reign, Nebuchadnezzar took steps to prevent any outbreak of rebellion in his empire. He had a huge gold-plated image built, ninety feet high and nine feet wide. He summoned all his officials of the empire to come to the dedication of the image. When they had gathered, he told them that when the royal

orchestra began to play, all were to fall down and worship the image. All who did not fall down and worship the image would be thrown into the fiery furnace. It was reported to the king that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego remained standing and did not bow down.

When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were brought before the king, he asked them if they would now bow down. If not, they would be thrown into the fiery furnace. They replied, "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, O king, but if He does not, we want you to know that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image." The king was furious and ordered the furnace to be heated seven times hotter. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were tied up and thrown into the blazing furnace. But as they fell into the furnace, the ropes burned off, they stood up, and walked around. The heat killed the men who threw them in.

Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and said, "Didn't we throw three men into the fire? I see four men loose, walking in the fire, and the fourth is like the Son of God." God had sent the Angel of the Lord, the Son of God, to save them from harm.

Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning furnace, and said, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the most high God, come out." When they came out, all saw that they were not burned and there was no smell of fire on their clothes. Nebuchadnezzar said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent His angel, and delivered His servants that trusted in Him. Therefore, I make a decree that every people, nation, and language, which say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces. There is no other God that can save like this." The king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

Through this appearance of the Angel of the Lord, the Judean captives were protected and preserved as a nation throughout the seventy year captivity.

- Nebuchadnezzar had a golden image built. Any, who would not bow down and worship it, would be thrown into the fiery furnace.
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused and were thrown into the furnace.
- God sent the Angel of the Lord, the Son of God, to save them.
- Nebuchadnezzar published a decree honoring the true God and protecting God's people during the seventy year captivity.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S SECOND DREAM

Daniel 4



Up to this time, Nebuchadnezzar had come to praise and give honor to the true God two times. One final time was yet to come toward the end of his reign. This came about through a strange dream. Nebuchadnezzar wrote the following letter to all people and nations:

“I thought it good to show the signs and wonders that the high God has done to me. How great are His signs and how mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation. I, Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in my house, and I had a dream which made me afraid. Therefore I made a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon that they might make known to me the

meaning of the dream, but they could not tell me the meaning. At last Daniel came in, whose name was Belteshazzar and the spirit of the Holy God is in him. I told him my dream.”

“Behold, I saw a great tree that grew reaching unto heaven. It had much fruit which fed and protected all the beasts of the field. The birds lived in the branches and all people were fed by it. I saw an holy one come down from heaven. He cried aloud and said, ‘Cut down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches. Leave the stump in the ground with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field. Let it be wet with the dew, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth: Let his heart be changed from man's heart to a beast's heart and let seven times pass over him.’ This matter is by the decree of the holy ones that all the living may know that the most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will.”

Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar the meaning. He said that the tree in the dream was Nebuchadnezzar himself. He was the ruler of all people. Animals and birds also prospered from him. Angels came to carry out God's judgment on him by cutting down the tree and removing him as king. The stump of the tree, Nebuchadnezzar, was to be bound by a band in the grass of the field. He would be taken away from people and chained with the royal dairy herd. He would eat grass like the cattle and remain out in the dew and rain, till seven seasons had passed. Nebuchadnezzar was to come to know that God alone reigns and gives the right to rule to whomever He chooses.

Because the stump of the great tree would be banded, the kingdom would remain for Nebuchadnezzar until he learned that God ruled. Daniel pleaded with the king to change his life style, help the poor, and do that which was right before God.

However, at the end of twelve months, Nebuchadnezzar said as he walked in the palace, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built by the might of my power, and for the honor

of my majesty?” Suddenly, a voice from heaven said, “O king Nebuchadnezzar, Your kingdom has been taken from you. You will live with the beasts of the field and eat grass as oxen, and seven times will pass over you, until you know that the most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will.”

At that very time, Nebuchadnezzar was taken away and chained in the field. He ate grass like the oxen, his hair grew like eagles’ feathers, and his nails like bird’s claws.

And at the end of those days, Nebuchadnezzar lifted his eyes unto heaven, his understanding returned, and he blessed the most High God.

Nebuchadnezzar said, “I blessed the most High, and I praised and honored Him that lives forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation! I, Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment. Those that walk in pride He is able to humble.”

Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom was given back to him. He reigned a total of forty-three years, 605-562 B.C.

- Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar’s second dream.
- Nebuchadnezzar was to be chained in the field with the cattle.
- When Nebuchadnezzar was restored to his kingdom, he praised and gave honor to the God of Heaven.
- Nebuchadnezzar reigned for forty-three years, 605-562 B.C.

BABYLON CONQUERED BY PERSIA

Daniel 5



After the death of Nebuchadnezzar, there were assassinations in the family. Finally, Nabonidus, son-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar, with his son, Belshazzar, grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, were the rulers of Babylon.

The kingdom to follow Nebuchadnezzar's great empire was Persia under Cyrus. Cyrus came with his army against Babylon.

To conquer mighty Babylon seemed almost impossible with its surrounding wall which was three hundred feet high and eighty feet thick. Cyrus prepared a different kind of attack. It was to be through the Euphrates River under the huge bronze gates that extended far below the surface of the river. Cyrus changed the direction of the Euphrates River so it would not flow into Babylon. His army could enter Babylon under the gates of the river on solid ground.

Trying to show a lack of fear, Belshazzar held a great banquet in his huge dining hall. To show his greatness, he had the sacred vessels, which had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem, brought in from which they drank their heathen toasts.

Suddenly, on the wall near him a great hand appeared burning letters into the wall and leaving the strange words, "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin". This frightened Belshazzar. He offered a gold necklace and a position of third ruler in the kingdom to whoever could read and give the meaning of these words; however no one was able to read it or tell what the writing meant.

The people at the banquet were upset as no one could read or give the meaning. Finally, the queen mother, perhaps Nebuchadnezzar's wife, stood up and said that when the great king lived, he turned to Daniel to tell the meaning of his strange dreams.

Daniel was immediately called to the banquet and offered the gifts for reading the words and giving their meaning. He told Belshazzar to keep his gifts and then proceeded to read the words, "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin." Then he gave their meaning.

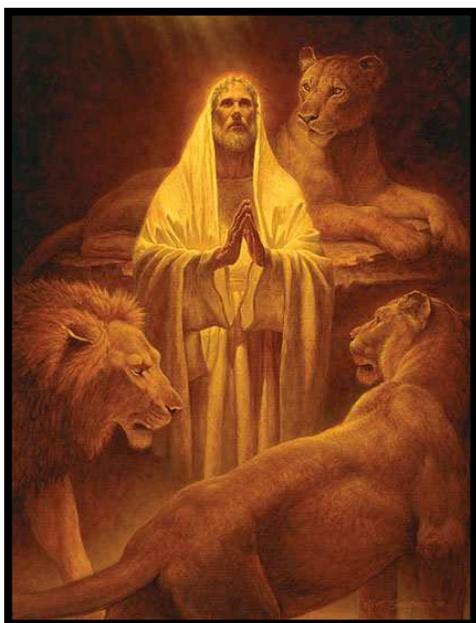
Mene - God has numbered your kingdom and finished it. Tekel - You have been weighed in the balance scale and found lacking. (Upharsin) Peres - Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians. Belshazzar put the gold chain around Daniel's neck and proclaimed him as the third ruler in the kingdom.

That night the Persian army entered the city of Babylon and took it without any fighting. Only Belshazzar was killed. Nabonidus was captured and exiled to his home in Arabia. The mighty empire of Babylon fell to the Persians.

- Belshazzar, ruler of Babylon, held a great banquet and used the sacred vessels from the temple in Jerusalem to drink their heathen toasts.
- A hand wrote “Mene, Mene, Tekel Upharsin” on the wall.
- Daniel read the words and gave the meaning. Belshazzar’s kingdom was finished and given to the Persians. Upharsin and Peres both mean “divided.”
- The Persians under Cyrus took the great city of Babylon without fighting.
- Only Belshazzar was killed.

DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN

Daniel 6



With the capture of Babylon, the Babylonian Empire ended and the Persian Empire under Cyrus began. In the first year of Cyrus' reign, about 539 B.C., Cyrus sent God's people back to Jerusalem ending the seventy year captivity.

Cyrus placed Darius the Mede as king. Darius, in turn, appointed one hundred-twenty satraps (governmental divisions) with three administrators over them. Daniel was one of the three administrators. He was old, but his wisdom and faithfulness were quickly noticed. In fact, he was so wise that king Darius wanted to set him over everything.

Because of this, Daniel quickly had enemies that rose up against him. They were vain and jealous men. They tried to find fault with Daniel and his administration, but he was constantly blameless and wise. In all things he continued to gain respect and honor, no matter how they opposed him. Finally they decided that they could not find fault with Daniel's work, so they decided to attack Daniel in his worship and faith, knowing that every day he opened his window toward Jerusalem and prayed. They suggested a special law and got Darius to pass and sign it. The law said: "Anyone who prays to any god in the next thirty days, except to you, O King, shall be thrown into the den of lions." Darius, seeing this as an opportunity to strengthen his position in the people's lives signed the law. A law of the Medes and Persians could never be changed or disobeyed by anyone, not even the next king.

Daniel heard about this new law, yet he continued to open his window and pray as he always had three times a day. The officials told Darius that Daniel had prayed to his God and had broken the king's law. The king was very upset and tried all day to find a way to save Daniel. The officials again went to Darius and demanded that Daniel be taken to the lions' den because he had disobeyed the king's law. Finally, Darius gave the order that Daniel be thrown into the den of lions. He said to Daniel, "Your God whom you serve constantly will rescue you."

The king did not sleep that night and early in the morning he went to the lions' den. He called to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God been able to protect you from the lions?" Daniel replied, "Oh king, live forever, my God sent His Angel and shut the lions' mouth. They did not hurt me because I was found innocent. I have never done any wrong to you." The king ordered that Daniel be taken out of the den, and the officials and their families who had accused Daniel be thrown into the lions' den.

Darius then wrote and signed a new law which was sent everywhere in his empire. It said, "In every part of my kingdom, people must tremble and fear the God of Daniel, for He is the living God. He endures forever. His Kingdom will not be destroyed and His reign will be even until the end. He has rescued Daniel from the lions."

God let Daniel see things of the future in visions or dreams which are written in the book of Daniel. In one of his visions, he saw God the Father, called the Ancient of Days, on His throne. He saw the Son of man, (Jesus) coming before God the Father to receive an everlasting dominion. (Jesus called himself the Son of man while He was on earth showing He was the fulfillment of Psalm 80)

- Daniel was wise and faithful in everything he did.
- Daniel was not hurt in the lions' den, because God sent the Angel of the Lord to close the lions' mouths.
- God protected His people under Persian rule.

ESTHER

The Book of Esther



The story of Esther begins when Xerxes, also known as Ahasuerus, took the throne in Persia after the death of his father, Darius Hystaspes. In his third year, he held a huge banquet for all the officials of his empire which lasted for six months. After this he held a seven day feast in Shushan, the capitol of Persia. On the last day of the feast, he sent for Queen Vashti to come to his feast and show her beauty, but she refused to come. Xerxes asked his officials what he should do about this disobedience. One said that what the queen had done would encourage women to disobey their husbands. Vashti should be removed as queen and her position given to another. A royal letter was sent to all the provinces stating what had happened and that wives were to obey their husbands. A search was held to find the most beautiful young women. Xerxes was to choose one of them to be his queen.

Among the women brought to the palace was Esther, a young Jewish girl who had been raised by her cousin, Mordecai, after her parents had died. Mordecai told Esther that she must not say that she was a Jewess. Xerxes chose her to be his queen after her year of preparation.

One day, Mordecai, who sat at the king's gate, overheard two of Xerxes's officials planning to kill the king. He sent a written message to Esther which she sent on to the king in Mordecai's name. The matter was investigated, both men were hung, and it was entered into the court records.

At this time, Xerxes had appointed Haman as his prime minister and all were instructed to bow when he passed by. When Mordecai would not bow to Haman, it was reported to Haman that Mordecai refused to bow because he was a Jew. Haman was angry and decided that all the Jews should be killed to satisfy the disrespect that was shown him.

Haman went to the king and said that scattered throughout the empire was a race of people who were different. They had their own laws and did not keep the king's laws. He offered the king ten thousand talents of silver and asked for permission to have them destroyed. The king agreed and gave Haman his signet ring to sign the decree. He told Haman that he could keep the money and do as he pleased with the people. Haman immediately had an official letter sent to the entire empire that on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month all the Jews were to be killed and their possessions taken as plunder. Throughout the empire there was great mourning among the Jews.

When Mordecai heard the news, he tore his clothes, put on sack cloth, and bitterly cried at the gate. Mordecai sent a copy of the decree to Esther and asked her to go to the king to plead for her people. Esther sent back a reply stating that she had not seen the king for thirty days, and that whoever entered the throne room uninvited would be killed unless the king held out his golden scepter. Mordecai told Esther that it was possible that she had become queen to save her people. Esther asked Mordecai to have all the Jews fast for three days. She would fast, also, then she would go to the king. If she would be killed, she would be killed.

On the third day, Esther, dressed in her royal robes, went to the king's throne room uninvited. He held out his golden scepter to her and asked her what she wanted. She said that she wanted the king and Haman to come to a banquet with her. At the banquet, the king asked what she wanted. She said that he and Haman should come to another banquet the next day and then she would tell the king what she wanted.

Haman was delighted at the honor shown him. But when he saw Mordecai at the gate, he became angry again. He told his wife and friends about his good fortune and, also, about Mordecai. Haman's wife and friends told him to build a gallows seventy five feet high and hang Mordecai on it. Haman ordered the gallows to be built.

ESTHER continued

The Book of Esther



That night when Xerxes could not sleep, he ordered the court records to be read to him. The scribe read the report that had come from Mordecai about the officials who planned to kill the king. Xerxes asked what had been done for Mordecai. The scribe said that nothing had been done. Early the next day, Xerxes had Haman brought to him and asked him, "What should be done to the man whom the king wants to honor?" Haman thought he was surely that one, so he said, "Let the man wear a robe of the king, ride on the king's horse wearing a royal crown and let an official lead the horse through the city, calling out, 'Thus shall it be done to the man the king wants to honor.'" The king told Haman to do that to Mordecai.

As a result, Haman had to dress Mordecai in the king's robe, put him on the king's horse, put the crown on his head, and lead him through the streets saying, "Thus it shall be done to the man the king delights to honor." When Haman left Mordecai at the king's gate, he covered his head and went home mourning. When he told his wife, she said if Mordecai was a Jew, Haman was going to fall before him. While they were speaking the king's servant came to take him to the queen's banquet.

At the banquet, Xerxes again asked what Esther wanted and she would be granted it up to half the kingdom. She replied that she wanted her life and the lives of her people spared for they had been sold to be killed. Xerxes asked, "Who is it that has done this?" Esther replied, "The enemy is this wicked Haman."

Xerxes was so angry he walked out to his palace garden. Haman was terrified and fell on the couch where Esther was reclining, pleading for his life. Xerxes stepped into the room again and said to Haman, "Will you try to force the queen in front of me in the palace?" The king had guards put a cloth over Haman's head, signifying that he was to die and to take him away. The king was told that Haman had built a gallows on which to hang Mordecai. The king said, "Hang Haman on it."

Esther told the king that she was a Jew and that Mordecai was her cousin. Mordecai was brought before the king. Xerxes took off his ring and gave it to Mordecai, thus making him prime minister. Esther in tears fell down on her knees at Xerxes' feet and asked him to undo what Haman had done if he loved her. According to the law of the Medes and Persians, no law could be changed or set aside. Therefore, the king told Mordecai to write a second letter which would be sent throughout the empire to protect their people. They wrote another letter which said that if anyone would attack them, they were to fight

back, kill their enemy, and take their possessions. The letter was sealed with the king's seal and quickly sent to one hundred and twenty seven provinces. This huge Persian Empire extended from India to Ethiopia and Africa. The decree was carried by men on horseback, mules, camels, and dromedaries.

When the thirteenth day of Adar, the twelfth month, came, the Jews were attacked. They killed seventy five thousand people who attacked them. Haman's ten sons were hung on the gallows, also. The Jews killed eight hundred on the fourteenth day of Adar. The Jews took no plunder from those they killed. The fourteenth and fifteenth days became days of celebration. Mordecai became great and together with Esther, they made it an official Jewish holiday, the Feast of Purim. It all began with Haman casting lots or Pur for the day to kill the Jews. The Feast of Purim is still celebrated today among the Jews as a time of joy and gift giving.

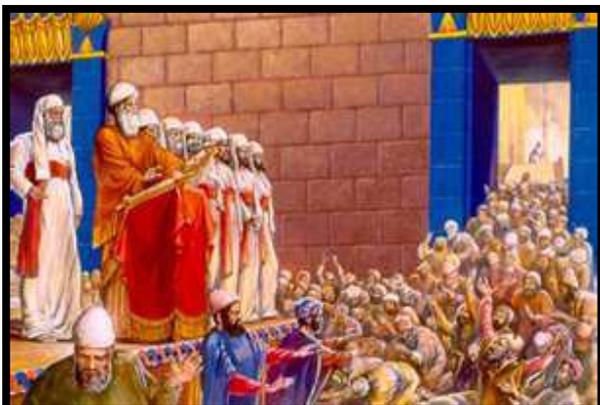
The importance of Esther is that God used her to save her and Mordecai's people, God's people, from annihilation. Had Haman not been stopped, there would have been no tribe of Judah from which Jesus was to be born in Bethlehem. Satan would have won and there would have been no Savior or everlasting life. But God protected His people, the Jews, and kept His promise of the Coming Messiah.

Strangely, the book of Esther never mentions the name of God.

- Esther, a Jewess, became Xerxes' queen in Persia.
- Haman's had a law passed to destroy all Jews.
- The laws of the Medes and the Persians could never be changed or abolished.
- Mordecai and Esther were used by God to save His people and God's plan of salvation through a new law which ordered all Jews to fight and kill anyone who would attack them.
- The book of Esther never mentions the name of God.

THE REMNANT RETURNS

Book of Ezra



God had warned Judah that because of their idolatry and unfaithfulness they would be carried into captivity in Babylon for seventy years, but that a remnant would return. The captivity would be a cleansing. Never again would they as a nation worship idols.

The prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah, both speak of this captivity. Isaiah prophesied that Cyrus would send the remnant back to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. The Jews are said to have shown him these passages.

In 538 B.C., Cyrus issued the following decree, “The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and He has appointed me to build a temple for Him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of His people among you, let him go up to Jerusalem and build the temple.” The decree was, also, an order to the governor and people of Palestine that he was sending the people back to their homeland to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple and they were to give them any help they needed.

The leaders of the returning remnant were Jeshua, the priest, and Zerubbabel. Cyrus sent back with the people 5,400 vessels of silver and gold which had been taken from Solomon’s temple. The preparations were difficult as animals, food, wagons, and builder’s tools had to be provided. The journey would be lengthy, about 1,000 miles, taking at least five months. In the group there were 42,360 people, 7,337 servants, 200 men and women singers, 736 horses, 245 mules, 435 camels, and 6,720 donkeys.

When they arrived in Jerusalem, they found the base of the altar and began to offer burnt offerings according to the Law of Moses. In 536 B.C., they began rebuilding the temple. The Samaritans living there asked to help in building the temple. When Zerubbabel and Jeshua refused their help, the Samaritans began a lengthy lawsuit against God’s people. As a result, the building of the temple was stopped.

In 520 B.C., Haggai, an elderly prophet, directed the people to start building the temple again. The governor, Tattnai, sent a letter to Darius asking that a search for Cyrus’s decree be made. The decree was found and Darius responded in a decree saying, “Do not interfere with the work on this temple of God. Let the Jewish elders rebuild this house of God on its site. The expenses are to be fully paid out of the royal treasury. Whatever is needed--young bulls, rams, male lambs for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, and wheat, salt, wine, and oil must be given them daily, so that they may offer sacrifices pleasing to the God of heaven. May God, who has caused His Name to dwell there, overthrow any king or people who lifts a hand to change this decree or to destroy this temple.” On the third day of the sixth month, 516 B.C., the temple was completed.

The seventy year Babylonian Captivity was now over. It was begun in 586 B.C. with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.

- Cyrus of Persia sent the people back and made provisions for them, 536/537 B.C.
- The seventy year captivity began to end with the remnant returning to Jerusalem.
- The temple was completed in 516 B.C. ending the seventy year captivity, 586-516

NEHEMIAH

Book of Nehemiah



In 457 B.C., Ezra, a priest, was sent to Jerusalem to help make needed spiritual and social reforms. About 2,000 more Jews went with Ezra. They brought back additional sacred vessels, silver and gold donations. When Ezra arrived in Jerusalem, he found the spiritual condition to be very bad. He gathered the people together and instructed them in God's Will by reading to them the Books of Moses

About thirteen years later, in 445 B.C., a group of Jews came to see Nehemiah in Persia. He had a high position in the government being a cup bearer to the king. Apparently, Ezra had not been able to cope with some of the problems. Nehemiah was different. He did not hesitate to use authority. Nehemiah received permission to go to Jerusalem as governor with an armed

escort. When Israel had a problem in which the people would not move, Nehemiah simply ordered the people to do it. You did not disobey or challenge him.

Nehemiah's main concern was the condition of the walls of Jerusalem which had been broken down. An unwallled city was considered worthless. After Nehemiah had inspected the walls, he organized the people. They started to rebuild the walls but the Samaritans threatened them. Nehemiah posted guards and the builders worked with one hand and a sword in the other hand. They completed the walls and set up the gates in fifty two days.

Nehemiah stayed for twelve years as governor. He returned to Persia for a time, but later came back again to enforce various reforms on the Jews.

An example of how Nehemiah dealt with a problem is seen in how he dealt with the salesmen who wanted to set up their business in Jerusalem on the Sabbath. Nehemiah said "no" and locked them out of the city. They then camped outside the city gates, luring the people out of the city on the Sabbath. Nehemiah told them he would order his soldiers to attack if they came again on the Sabbath. The salesmen stayed away.

- Nehemiah was sent to Jerusalem as governor to help Ezra reform the Jews and make them into a nation.
- Under Nehemiah, the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt.
- Reforms were carried out. Nehemiah stayed twelve years as governor.

MALACHI, THE LAST OLD TESTAMENT PROPHET

Book of Malachi



About 450-400 B.C., God sent Malachi, the last prophet, to His people. In his book of Malachi, he pointed out the sins of the people and warned them against their ways. The Messiah was coming to His temple and they would surely come under His judgment. He says very clearly that the Old Testament Divine Angel of the Covenant was none other than the promised coming Savior or Messiah. He would be preceded by a herald, (John the Baptist), but He (Christ) would come to the temple they had built.

The conclusion of the Old Testament period shows how God's people lost their faith in two ways. After the captivity they no longer worshiped idols, but they stopped believing that the sacrifices pointed to the suffering and death of the coming Messiah as the Savior from sin. They came to believe that the sacrifice alone was enough to satisfy God. Secondly, many years of foreign domination and captivity caused them to want an earthly Messiah, a great military leader who would lead them to perfect freedom through His rule over the entire world. The Old Testament ends on a sad note. God's salvation was rejected by the people who were created by God to proclaim it.

We should learn from this that the future we seek dare not be devoted to temporal life here on earth, but to everlasting life in heaven with God through Jesus Christ, the Savior, who came to this earth to save us all.

After Malachi, came the four hundred years of silence from God. It was not broken until the birth of Jesus. During these four hundred years, the Greeks conquered the Persians under Alexander the Great in 333 B.C. After a meeting of the high priests and Alexander, the Jews were treated well under the Greeks, but this changed after Alexander's death. They finally came under the rule of a Greek Kingdom called the Seleucids. A Seleucid king, Antiochus Epiphanes, persecuted the Jews and tried to force them back into idolatry. They rebelled under a Jewish family called the Maccabees and finally won their independence through Rome. They tried to set up a Jewish Kingdom, but Rome conquered them, and they became a state under Roman governors.

The Greeks almost destroyed the religion of the Jews. The fame of Greece, its wisdom, art, language, and religion hurt the Jew's faith. Many of the younger Jews tried to live and act like the Greeks. The Romans did not harm anyone unless they were openly atheistic. They considered atheism to be a cause for execution, because it was a rebellion against law and the gods who gave the laws to mankind.

By the time Jesus came, the Jews looked for a military Messiah who would give them freedom, and world honor, not a Savior from sin. The Bible sums up the end of the Old

Testament very well, when it says, “He came to His own, and His own received Him not.”

There were six great empires of this world that came to power forming their empires by politics and warfare. Egypt, the oldest, was the first to lose its supremacy. Assyria replaced Egypt. Assyria was finally replaced by the Babylonians. Babylon in time was replaced by the Persians. The Persians were replaced by the Greeks. The final empire was the Roman Empire. God used each empire to absorb the power of the one before it. Each empire had a special service that it performed for God. Through Egypt, God created and established the Messianic nation of Israel. Through Assyria, God judged and wiped out Northern Israel that became unfaithful. Through Babylon, God judged and cleansed Judah, the Southern half of His Messianic Nation, of idolatry in the seventy year captivity. Through Persia, God returned the remnant of His Messianic Nation to Palestine to set up the coming of Jesus, the Messiah. Through Greece, God gave the world one language so that the message of redemption could easily be spread world wide. Through Rome, God gave the world unity and forty years of peace, called the Pax Roma during which God redeemed the world in Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah and the message was taken to the world.

It was the Son of God, the Messiah, the Second Person of the Trinity who controlled those empires and history to prepare for His coming as the Savior and the Divine Bringer of God’s salvation to all mankind till the end of the world.

- Malachi, the last prophet, foretold the coming of the herald, John the Baptist, and the Messiah, Jesus.
- After the Babylonian Captivity, the faith of the Jewish nation changed.
- After Malachi, there were four hundred years of silence from God.
- God used the six great empires to prepare the world for the coming of Christ: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greek, Roman.
- The Jews were hurt spiritually by the Greeks. They finally looked for an earthly Messiah, not a spiritual Redeemer and King.
- It was the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity who controlled those empires and history to prepare for His coming as Jesus, the Savior of the world.

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament is the record of the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament. It reveals what the Old Testament foretold. The New Testament brings into focus the full meaning and purpose of the Old Testament. As you enter the New Testament, you are entering the Messianic Age which was first foretold in the Garden of Eden. God described the coming Messiah to all people throughout the Old Testament so that He could be recognized and accepted.

The preparation for the coming Messiah can be seen in the consolidation of nations by the six great empires of history, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greek, and Roman, the establishment of one world-wide language, and the forty year period of peace called the Pax Romana during which Jesus was born. This was necessary so that the message of God's redemption of the human race in Christ could easily be taken from country to country. Under Rome there was one set of laws and one system of highways from country to country. It can, also, be clearly seen in the religious toleration of that day, so that nothing would hinder the proclamation of God's salvation in Christ.

Two prophecies in the Old Testament told when the Messiah, Jesus, would be born. Isaac prophesied that Esau would some day rule over Jacob. Jacob prophesied that the time would come when there would be no Jewish king on the throne of Judah. When Herod the Great, an Edomite, sat on the Jewish throne as the Jewish king, believers among the Jews who knew these prophecies were looking for the Messiah to be born. The prophet Malachi said that the Old Testament Angel of the Lord, the Messenger of the Covenant, in whom God's people delighted would suddenly come to His temple. He would be the Lord they were seeking.

Before Jesus' birth, He was described in words involving the heavens and the earth. He would be God's Seed planted in the human race to be the source of everlasting life for all. He would be the Divine Rock, the Refuge of His people. He would be the coming Goel (Hebrew for Champion or Redeemer) of whom Job spoke, coming to earth, to suffer and die for mankind and win for them everlasting life. He would be the Divine Cloud covering His people of all time by day and by night in leading them home to heaven. He would be God's Lamb who would give His life that all sin might be forgiven and everlasting life restored to believing mankind. He would be the Star of heaven, the guiding Light of glory for His people. He would be the Divine Sun to bring light and life to a sin darkened world, to enlighten His believing people on earth and to glorify them in heaven.

The Son of God had indeed prepared the world for His coming as the Savior from sin and the Divine Bringer of everlasting salvation, but His chosen people, the Jews, had not prepared themselves for this. They wanted earthly power and riches. His coming was in reality their darkest spiritual hour. Satan had prepared well for the Savior's coming.

Through the three hundred years of Greek domination, many of the Jews had discarded God's Covenant of Salvation through a Savior from sin. Like the heathen, they seemed

to believe that sacrifices were to be used to satisfy God's divine hunger for sacrifices. They wanted nothing to do with a Savior from sin. Their faith was all but gone.

Their teachers formed two political parties, the Sadducees and the Pharisees. The Sadducees included the judges, the high priest, and their supporters. They did not believe the whole Old Testament, only the Pentateuch, the first five books of Moses. Neither did they believe in life after death or angels. They believed in absolute free will. Because of this, a person's life in this world was, in effect, heaven or hell. The Pharisees, their rivals, were the teachers of the people. They believed in the Old Testament, but believed it pointed to the nation of Israel as the suffering savior of the world. They believed in life after death, in the resurrection, in angels, and everlasting life through their racial descent from Abraham and through the keeping of God's Mosaic Law. They added to God's Mosaic Law six hundred more laws. The Sadducees and Pharisees hated each other having on occasions in their past history resorted to murder of their rivals if they held political power at the time. Both Sadducees and Pharisees looked for a political savior to deliver them from Roman rule and bring them world power.

Herod, the Great, an Edomite sat on the Jewish throne reigning from 40 B.C. to 4 B.C. He was a personal friend of Caesar Augustus, chairman of the Olympic Games, and a great builder. He spent his entire reign rebuilding the Jewish temple. He was evil, ruthless, and murderous. He wanted people to cry when he died, so he imprisoned many leaders of the Jews and ordered them to be executed when he died. Fortunately, the family overruled it and it became a day of rejoicing instead. Herod and his family were so evil that in about one hundred years, God removed the entire family and any relative of Herod from the earth. Jesus was born shortly before 4 B.C. What a world He came into in divine saving love!

In the beginning words of his Gospel, John shows that the Son of God, the Divine Word of the Old Testament, became the Jesus of the New Testament. Jesus, born of the virgin Mary, was the Promised Messiah, the Savior of the world. John points to His divinity when he says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the Light of men. The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

THE ARCHANGEL, GABRIEL, COMES TO ZECHARIAH

Luke 1



Zechariah, an old devout priest, experienced the greatest privilege in his life when his time to offer sacrifices in the temple had come. There were so many priests descended from Aaron that the opportunity to offer sacrifices was only once in a lifetime for some. Both Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth, were descendants of Aaron. What a joyous time this must have been for him! God had chosen Zechariah to be the father of John the Baptist, the herald of the Savior.

While Zechariah was serving as priest offering incense to God, suddenly Gabriel, the archangel messenger of God, appeared frightening him. Gabriel said, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife, Elizabeth, will have a son, and you are to name him John. He

will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of His birth. He will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit before His birth. Many of the children of Israel he shall turn to the Lord, their God. He will go before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to prepare a people to receive the Lord."

Zechariah asked the archangel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well past child bearing." The angel answered, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to tell you this good news. You will not be able to speak until this happens because you did not believe my words, which will come true." The people wondered why Zechariah stayed so long in the temple. When he came out, he could not speak to them. They finally understood that he had seen a vision in the temple because he kept making signs to them.

When his time of service at the temple was completed, he returned home. After this, his wife, Elizabeth, became pregnant. Elizabeth spoke some beautiful words in gratitude and faith. "The Lord has done this for me. In these days he has shown His favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."

- Zechariah was told by Gabriel that his wife would give birth to a son to be named John, meaning, "God is gracious."
- John would be a Nazarite and the herald of Jesus, the coming Messiah.
- Zechariah was not able to speak until the child was born, because he did not believe the angel's message.

GABRIEL ANNOUNCES THE BIRTH OF JESUS TO MARY

Luke 1 Matthew 1



Six months later, God sent the angel Gabriel, to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to Mary who was engaged to be married to Joseph, a carpenter. She was afraid and wondered why he had come. The angel said to her, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you. Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son. You are to give Him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, and His kingdom will never end."

Mary asked Gabriel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you. That holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. And Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she is in her sixth month. Nothing is impossible with God." Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. Let it be as you have said."

Mary then went to the home of Zechariah and Elizabeth in Judah. When Elizabeth saw her, she said to Mary, "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the child you will bear. But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Mary said, "My soul glorifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." It seems she stayed about three months.

When Elizabeth gave birth to a son, her neighbors and relatives came to share her joy. They thought he should be named Zechariah after his father, but Elizabeth said, "No! His name will be John." They asked Zechariah what the child should be named. He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." Immediately, he could speak.

Zechariah, filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesied, "Blessed is the Lord, the God of Israel, for He has come and has redeemed His people, as He spoke to His holy prophets who have been since the world began, to remember His holy Covenant and the oath which He swore to our father, Abraham. And you, my child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; for you will go on before the face of the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give His people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins. Through the tender mercy of our God with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death to guide our feet into the way of peace."

This was spoken of throughout the hill country of Judea. It had to have come to the ears of the priests. The fact that the mother of the Messiah had been in Zechariah's house,

also, had to be known. The herald and the Messiah were coming as had been foretold. It seems that this news was simply forgotten, a mark of the sad condition of faith in Judah at this time.

When Mary returned, it was obvious that she was pregnant. Joseph decided to quietly break the engagement. When he was considering this, an angel appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son. Give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet, "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call His name "Immanuel" -- which means, "God with us." When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel had commanded and took Mary to be his wife.

- The Archangel Gabriel announced Jesus' birth to Mary.
- Mary was descended from David through Nathan, Solomon's brother.
- Joseph was descended from David, through Solomon.
- Mary visited Elizabeth for the three months before John was born.
- Elizabeth and Zechariah named their son, John, as they had been told.
- The Holy Spirit caused Zechariah to foretell John's future.
- Joseph was told by an angel in a dream that Mary would give birth to the Christ Child. He believed the angel and took Mary to be his wife.
- As was foretold, Jesus would be born of a virgin and His name would be "Immanuel," meaning "God with us." Isaiah 7:14

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

Luke 2 Matthew 2



Scripture foretold the place where Jesus was to be born. “But you, Bethlehem Ephratha, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall He come forth unto me, who is to be ruler in Israel whose going forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth in Galilee, about eighty miles from Bethlehem. To force them to go to Bethlehem when the time was near for Jesus to be born, God caused Caesar Augustus, the Roman Emperor, to pass a law that everyone was to register to be taxed. This meant that everyone had to go to their family’s home city. Joseph and Mary had to go to Bethlehem because they were from the family of David.

It was a very long journey for Mary. When they came to Bethlehem, they could find no place to spend the night for many people had come there. Finally, Joseph found an inn with a stable for animals where they could stay. It was there that Jesus was born. Mary wrapped her baby in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger on a bed of hay.

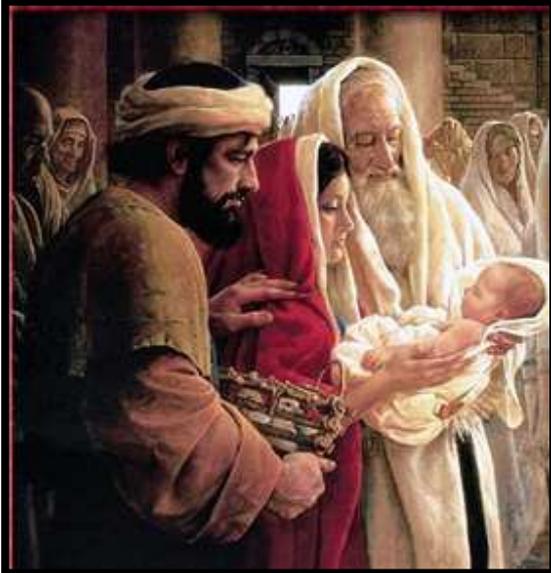
God chose to first give the good news of the birth of Jesus that night to shepherds who were watching over their flocks. An angel from the Lord suddenly appeared to them, and the brightness of the cloud of God’s glory, the Shekinah, shone round about them. The shepherds were very frightened. The angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid, I bring You good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto You is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; You will find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” Suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

When the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said, “Let us go to Bethlehem, and see what has come to pass, which the Lord has made known unto us.” They hurried and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. When they had seen it, they told everyone, and all who heard it wondered about what the shepherds had told them. The shepherds praised God for all the things that they had heard and seen and told everyone about the birth of the Messiah.

- Mary and Joseph left Nazareth and went to Bethlehem to register to be taxed. Jesus was born there fulfilling the prophecy of the place of His birth. Micah 5:2
- Jesus’ birth was announced by an angel to shepherds who went to Bethlehem.

THE PRESENTATION OF JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

Luke 2



In the Old Testament, God showed His great love for His people from birth to the grave. To claim every boy to be one of His people, He established the Rite of Circumcision on the 8th day for every Israelite boy. The first born son had to be redeemed by the father for five shekels on the 40th day through the Rite of Redemption.

Being devout believers, Joseph and Mary were obedient to God's Law. On the 8th day Jesus was circumcised. This was usually done at home by the local rabbi. He was given the name "Jesus" as Gabriel told Mary He was to be named.

On the 40th day after birth, Mary and Joseph took Jesus to be presented to the priest at the temple for the Ceremony of Redemption. Two benedictions or prayers were said: one, for the Law of Redemption and the other for the Gift of the First Born. After this the redemption money of five shekels was paid by Joseph.

After the birth of every child, the mother had to go through a Rite of Purification. For the boy, it was on the 40th day and for the girl, it was on the 80th day. Two offerings were required, the burnt offering of a year old lamb and a sin offering of a turtle dove or pigeon. The burnt offering was for a continuation of the blessing of living and serving God. The sin offering was for spiritual cleansing.

Mary, in obedience to God's Law, also, went to the temple when Jesus was Redeemed on the 40th day for her Rite of Purification which required two offerings. Since many of God's people were too poor to buy a lamb for a burnt offering, the poor were allowed to sacrifice a turtle dove or young pigeon in place of the lamb. Joseph and Mary completed Mary's purification by offering two turtle doves and two young pigeons.

While they were fulfilling God's Law, Simeon an elderly man, came up to them. He had been told by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Christ. That day, he was moved by the Spirit to enter the temple court. When he saw Jesus, he took Him up in his arms and praised God, saying, "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, according to your word: For my eyes have seen your salvation, which You have prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel."

Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, “This child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that will be spoken against. Yes, a sword will pierce your own soul, also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. “

Anna, a prophetess and widow for eighty four years, was at the temple at this time, also. She never left the temple but worshiped there night and day. She came up to Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus and gave thanks to God. She spoke about the child to the believers in Jerusalem.

After this, Joseph and Mary returned to Bethlehem where they had found a home in which to live.

God in His divine love for mankind sent His Son to this earth to be the sacrificial Lamb to redeem the entire human race. Jesus entered upon His earthly mission by perfectly fulfilling God’s Law by being redeemed by Joseph for five shekels. God the Father, in doing this, took Jesus, His only begotten Son, and placed Him under the Law. As the Lamb of God, He became man’s substitute and God’s Lamb of Redemption for the sin of the world. He was, is, and will always be the great Redeemer who died that they which live should not henceforth live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

- On the 8th day, He was given the name “Jesus” and was circumcised.
- On the 40th day, according to God’s Law, Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the temple for the Presentation and Redemption for first born boys.
- Mary, also, had to go to the temple for her purification and to offer two sacrifices.
- In the temple, Simeon prophesied about Jesus.
- Anna praised God upon seeing Jesus and spoke of Him to the believers in Jerusalem.
- Jesus became God’s sacrificial Lamb to redeem the world.

THE WISE MEN

Matthew 2



A while after Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Magi or wise men came from the East to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? We have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." When Herod the king heard these things, he was troubled and called in the chief priests and scribes and asked them where Christ should be born. They said, "In Bethlehem in Judea, for this is what the prophet has written: `But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will

come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.'" When Herod found out the time when the special star had appeared, he sent the wise men to Bethlehem and said, "Go and look for the child. As soon as you find Him, come back and tell me, so that I can go and worship Him."

The wise men went to find the new born king in Bethlehem. As they left Jerusalem where they had expected to find the king, the star which they had seen in the East led them to Bethlehem and the place where the child was. Since the journey for the wise men must have taken months, Mary and Joseph were now living in a house. When the wise men saw the child with His mother, Mary, they bowed down and worshiped Him. They brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These rich gifts would be needed by Joseph and Mary to travel and provide for their future needs in Egypt.

The wise men were warned in a dream by God not to go back to Herod because he wanted to kill the child, not worship him, so they went back to their country another way.

When they had gone, an angel came to Joseph in a dream saying, "Get up, take the young child and His mother and go to Egypt. Stay there until I bring you word, for Herod will seek for the child to kill Him." That very night Joseph and Mary took baby Jesus to Egypt, where they stayed until the death of Herod. This fulfilled what the prophet Hosea had foretold long ago. "Out of Egypt I called my son."

When Herod realized that the wise men had decided not to return to him, he gave orders to kill all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under. Jeremiah the prophet foretold this sorrow that would be brought on Bethlehem.

After Herod died, an angel told Joseph in a dream, "Take the child and His mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought to take the child's life are dead." When Joseph heard that Archelaus, Herod's son, was reigning in Judea, he was afraid to go back to Bethlehem. Joseph went back to their home in Nazareth. It was in Nazareth where Jesus

grew up as the son of Joseph, a carpenter. This fulfilled what was said through the prophets, "He will be called a Nazarene."

Jesus grew and was filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon Him.

- Magi or wise men from the East went to Herod in Jerusalem to find the "king of the Jews" because they had seen His star.
- The Magi led by the star found Jesus in Bethlehem. They worshiped Him and offered rich gifts which would be needed in Egypt.
- When Herod saw that the wise men did not return to him, he ordered the death of all baby boys in Bethlehem, fulfilling what Jeremiah foretold of this sorrow in Bethlehem. Jeremiah 31:15.
- Joseph was warned in a dream to flee to Egypt, fulfilling Hosea 11:1.
- After the death of Herod, Joseph took his family back to Nazareth fulfilling what the prophets said, that Jesus would be called a Nazarene.

JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

Luke 2



The years passed by in Nazaeth. When Jesus was twelve years old, the coming Passover was especially important to Him. It was a time when Jewish twelve year old boys were examined by the priests in Jerusalem and given the title, “sons of the law.” Every year Mary and Joseph went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. On this long journey the young boys walked with the women, the men walking ahead of them.

When they came to Jerusalem and arrived at the temple, according to the Jewish custom, Jesus and the other twelve year old boys were examined by the priests and were then called “sons of the law.” They were to take on the spiritual responsibilities of a man in keeping the Law and in observing the required feasts.

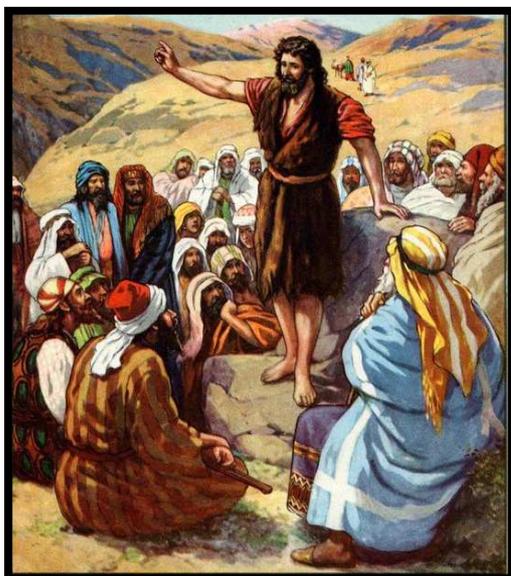
After becoming “sons of the law,” the boys could walk either with the men or with the women. Mary and Joseph started home each thinking Jesus was with the other. They did not know that Jesus had stayed in Jerusalem. After they had traveled all day, they could not find Jesus in the camp. They went a day’s journey back to Jerusalem and did not find Him the next day. As they were looking for Him on the third day, they found Him in the temple sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard Him was amazed at His understanding and His answers.

When his parents saw Him, His mother said, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you sorrowing." Jesus answered, "Why were you looking for me? Didn't you know that I would be about my Father's business?" It was a gentle or unexpected reminder that He was here on earth as the Messiah or Christ, not just as their son. They should have known where He would be. Jesus went home with them and was a perfect son. Mary remembered and thought about all these things. As Jesus grew older in wisdom and stature, He pleased both God and men.

- At age twelve, Jewish boys went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover to be examined by the priests and to become “sons of the law.”
- Since Jesus stayed behind in the temple, Mary and Joseph could not find Him.
- Returning to Jerusalem, they found Jesus in the temple on the third day.
- Jesus said, “Didn’t you know I would be about my Father’s business?”

JOHN THE BAPTIST

Luke 3 Matthew 3



John, the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, began his work as the herald of Jesus when he was thirty. He was known as John the Baptist. Scripture says, he spoke of the coming Jesus as the Messiah in the spirit and power of Elijah. He said of Jesus, "This is He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because He was before me.'" John went into all the country around the Jordan preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. Many people came to John confessing their sins and were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

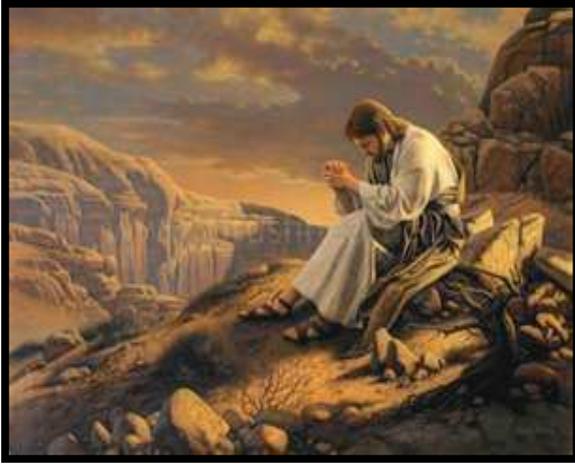
The Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask John who he was. John answered, "I am not the Christ." They asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah? Are you the Prophet?" He answered "No." Some believed that Elijah, the great prophet, would return. Finally they said, "Who are you?" John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'" Some Pharisees questioned him, "Why do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" "I baptize with water," John replied, "but there is one among you whom you do not know. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. He is the one who comes after me, who is preferred before me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie."

When Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John, John said to Him, "I have need to be baptized by you, and you are coming to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so, it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." God's will had to be fulfilled. As soon as Jesus was baptized, heaven opened, and John saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on Jesus. A voice from heaven, God the Father, said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." The three Persons of the Trinity were present, the Father (the voice), the Son, (Jesus as a man) and the Holy Spirit (as a dove.) Jesus was about thirty years old when He began His ministry.

- John the Baptist preached and baptized for the forgiveness of sins.
- Jesus came to John to be baptized because it was God the Father's will.
- A voice from heaven said, "You are my beloved Son." A dove sat on Him. The Three Persons of the Trinity were present; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- Jesus began His ministry at the age of thirty.

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

Matthew 4 Luke 4



After being baptized, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert not far from Jericho to be tempted by Satan. It was God's will for Jesus to meet Satan as a perfect man and overcome his temptations. After fasting forty days and forty nights, Jesus was hungry and weak. Satan came to Him in the first of three temptations and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: `Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

This is a hard lesson to learn. Food, drink, and the things of life can easily become so important to us that we make them more important to us than God. Had Jesus made His hunger and weakness more important than defeating Satan for mankind, He would have sinned and there would have been no salvation, no forgiveness, and no everlasting life.

Satan then miraculously took Jesus to the highest point of the temple in Jerusalem about twenty miles away from the desert. This point of the temple was about six hundred feet above the ground. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. It is written: "He will command His angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." Jesus answered him, "It is also written: `You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'"

This is done often when people go into danger for the thrill of it or for money. This is tempting God to protect you in a needless, foolish, or dangerous action. If Jesus had done this, He would have landed unharmed. He would have been famous and declared the Messiah and the King of the Jews, just an earthly king. He would have given up being the Savior from sin by suffering and dying as a perfect offering to God for human sin. There would have been no redemption for the human race and Satan would have won.

Again, Satan miraculously took Jesus to a very high mountain, probably Mt. Hermon, about one hundred miles away. Satan miraculously showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. He said, "All this I will give you, if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Get away from me, Satan! For it is written: `Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'" When the devil left him, angels came and attended Him.

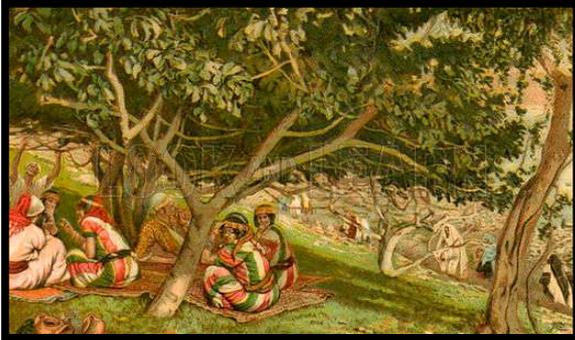
To worship is to agree that someone is greater and more powerful than you. Satan had become the prince of this world when he caused Adam and Eve to sin. Mankind was

now under his power. To have agreed that Satan was the ruler of the world would have made Satan to be God and Jesus, his servant. Jesus would no longer be God's Messiah or the Savior from sin. There would be no forgiveness of sins or everlasting life for anyone.

- Jesus had to meet Satan as a true sinless man and overcome him.
- Satan tempted Jesus to turn stones into bread to satisfy His hunger after eating nothing for forty days. Jesus replied, "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God"
- Satan miraculously took Jesus to a high wall of the temple in Jerusalem. He said, "Jump off, the angels will hold you up in their hands." Jesus replied, "It is also written, 'you shall not tempt your Lord.'"
- Satan then miraculously took Jesus to a high mountain. He said, "Bow down and worship me. I will give you the world."
- Jesus replied to Satan: "Get away from me, Satan. It is written, 'you shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.'"
- From God comes everlasting life. From Satan comes everlasting death.

JESUS CALLS FOUR OF HIS DISCIPLES

John 1



Sometime later, John saw Jesus coming toward him. He said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" John was with two of his disciples and when they saw Jesus passing by, they followed Him. Jesus asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Teacher, where are you staying?" "Come and see." Jesus replied. So they spent the day with Him. Andrew, Simon

Peter's brother, was one of the two. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother, Simon Peter, and brought him to Jesus. He told him, "We have found the Messiah." Jesus looked at Simon Peter and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas or Peter (Cephas and Peter mean "Rock.")

Finding Philip, Jesus said to him, "Follow me." Philip found Nathanael and said, "We have found the one Moses and the prophets wrote about, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." "Nazareth! Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. When Jesus saw Nathanael He said, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "Before Philip called you, I saw you while you were still under the fig tree." Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God, the King of Israel." Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than that. You will see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man."

It was a great day in their lives. They had found their Savior and had talked with Him face to face. Jesus later told His disciple, Thomas, "Because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are they who have not seen but still believed." You and I have not seen Jesus face to face, yet we are among those blessed people who believe in Jesus. How thankful and happy we should be.

- When John with two of his disciples saw Jesus, He said, "Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."
- Andrew, one of John's followers, brought his brother, Simon Peter, to Jesus.
- Philip found Nathanael and brought him to Jesus.
- Jesus began His ministry by calling Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael to follow Him. They recognized Him as the Messiah.
- Andrew brought Peter and Philip brought Nathanael to Jesus. We call this evangelism today. We all should try to bring someone to Jesus in our lives, whether personally or through mission work of the church.

THE FIRST MIRACLE

John 2



Not long after this, Jesus and His disciples were invited to a wedding at Cana in Galilee. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was there, also. Wedding celebrations lasted a week and the wedding couple had to furnish the food and the wine. In time, the wine was used up. Mary, noticed this and told Jesus, "They have no more wine."

Jesus replied, "Woman, why do you involve me? My time has not yet come." When Jesus called her "woman," it was not being disrespectful. Jesus did not refuse to help, rather He said that it was not yet time. Mary believing that He would help said to the servants, "Do whatever He tells you."

Nearby there were six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." When they were filled, Jesus told them to take some to the master of the banquet. The master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not know where this excellent wine had come from, but the servants who had filled the jars knew. He called the bridegroom aside and said, "Everyone brings out the best wine first, and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink, but you have saved the best wine until now."

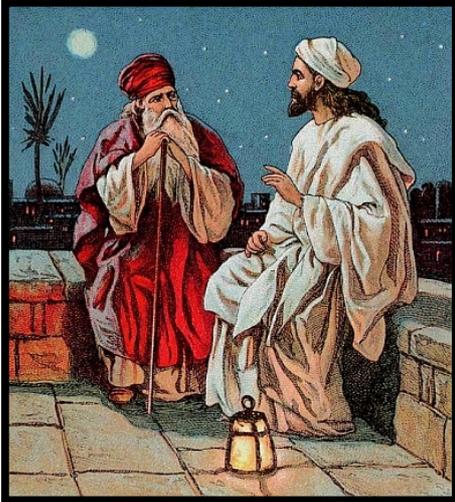
This was the first of His miraculous signs, causing His disciples to put their faith in Him. After this, Jesus went to Capernaum with His mother, brothers, and disciples where they stayed for a few days. When it was time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts He found men selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. Jesus made a whip out of cords, and drove them all out of the temple area. He overturned the tables of the money changers and scattered the money. He said to them, "How dare you turn my Father's house into a market place!"

The Jews demanded of him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it up in three days?" Jesus was speaking about His body, not the physical temple.

- At the wedding in Cana, Mary suggested that Jesus perform a miracle. Jesus gently rebuked her, but Mary told the servants to do whatever they were told.
- Jesus told the servants to fill the stone water jars with water.
- Jesus' first miracle was turning the water into wine, about 150 gallons.
- Jesus cleansed the temple by driving out the money changers and animals.
- When asked by what authority He did this, Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." This pointed to His death and resurrection.

NICODEMUS

John 3



One night, Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin, (a 70 member Jewish supreme court) came to Jesus and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. No one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with Him." Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said to you, You must be born again. The wind blows

where it pleases. You hear it but you can't tell where it comes from or where it goes: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." Spiritual rebirth comes from God without being seen.

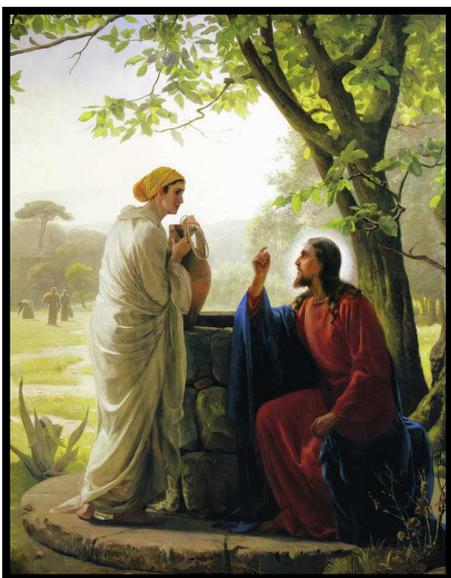
Nicodemus secretly came to faith. After Jesus' death He openly showed his faith by helping to bury Jesus. Tradition says that because of this, he was stripped of his position and wealth. He spent his last years in a country house owned by the great teacher, Gamaliel.

Jesus continued to teach, saying, "No one has ever gone into heaven except the One who came from heaven -- the Son of man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so also the Son of man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God'."

- Jesus told Nicodemus, a Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin, that there must be a spiritual rebirth through baptism of the Holy Spirit.
- Nicodemus secretly came to faith. He openly showed his faith in the burial of Jesus.
- John 3:16, "For God so loved the world." This is why God sent a Savior. Whoever believes in Jesus, the Savior, will have everlasting life. Whoever does not believe will be condemned in hell.

THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

John 4



When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison by Herod, He went back to Galilee going through Samaria. He came to a town in Samaria called Sychar and stopped by Jacob's well to rest. His disciples went into the town to buy food. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" She said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan. How can you ask me for a drink?" Jesus answered her, "If you knew who it is that asks you for a drink, you would ask Him for living water." The woman said, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself?" Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will

never thirst." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

Jesus told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." "I don't have a husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "What you have said is true. You do not have a husband. You have had five husbands, and the one you are now living with is not your husband." "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus declared, "God is spirit, and the time is coming when His worshipers must worship Him in spirit and truth." The woman said, "I know that Messiah, who is called Christ, is coming. When He comes, He will explain everything to us." Then Jesus said, "I am he."

Jesus' disciples returned and were surprised to find Him talking to the Samaritan woman. Believing that Jesus was the Messiah, the woman left her jar and hurried to the town. She said to the people, "Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did. Isn't this the Christ?" When the Samaritans came to Him, they urged Him to stay with them. Because of Jesus' words, not His miracles, many became believers. They said, "Now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

- Jesus asked a Samaritan woman for a drink. She asked for His living water.
- When Jesus pointed to her sin, she recognized Him as the promised Messiah.
- Many people came to Him and believed because they heard Jesus themselves.
- God must be worshiped in spirit and truth. The place is not important.

JESUS HEALS THE OFFICIAL'S SON

John 4 Luke 4



After the two days in Sychar of Samaria, Jesus left for Cana of Galilee. When a government official heard that Jesus was there, he went to find Him. He believed that Jesus could heal his son who was dying at his home in Capernaum about fifteen miles away, a day's journey. When the official found Jesus, he begged him to come and heal his son. Jesus tested the official's faith saying to him, "Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders you will never believe." The official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies." Jesus replied, "You may go. Your son will live."

The man showed great faith. Believing Jesus' words, he stayed there overnight, and started home the next day. While he was still on the way, his servants met him saying, "Your son is living" When he asked when his son got better, they said to him, "The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour." (About one o'clock in the afternoon) Then the father knew that it was the exact time that Jesus had said to him, "Go home. Your son lives." So he and everyone in his household believed.

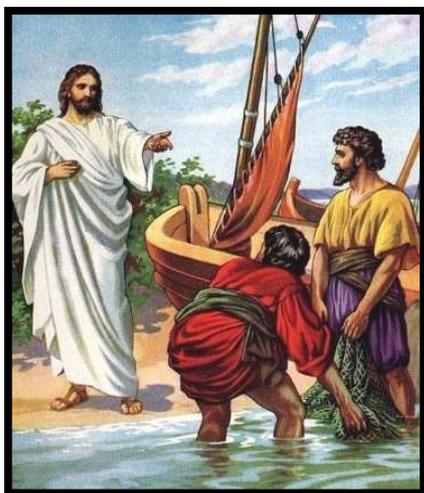
Then Jesus went to Nazareth where He had been brought up, and as usual went to the synagogue. As He stood up to read, the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. Unrolling it, He read, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to free the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Then He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. He began by saying, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your ears."

They were amazed and said, "Isn't this Joseph's son?" Jesus said to them, "Surely you will say, 'Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.' I tell you the truth, no prophet is accepted in his home town. There were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when there was a severe famine, yet Elijah was sent to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. There were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed, only Naaman the Syrian." All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They drove Him out of the town, and took Him to the top of the hill in order to throw Him down the cliff. But Jesus walked right through the crowd and went on His way.

- An official found Jesus and asked Him to heal his son. Jesus said his son would live. Believing, the official returned home and found his son had been healed.
- In the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus read from the scroll of Isaiah which showed that He was the fulfillment of this prophesy. The people wanted to kill him, but He walked right through the crowd.
- It is hard for people to accept the fact that all are sinful alike and all are redeemed alike. No human beings are beyond God's salvation in Christ.

JESUS CALLS HIS DISCIPLES

Matthew 4 Mark 1 Luke 5, 6



One day as Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, He saw Peter and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. He said to them, "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed Him. When He had gone a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Jesus called to them and they immediately left their father Zebedee and followed Jesus.

Jesus went with James and John to the home of Peter and Andrew in Capernaum. Peter's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever. Jesus went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them. That evening was amazing and unforgettable. The people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door of Peter's home to see Jesus' power and feel His love. Jesus healed many who had various diseases and drove out many demons.

Sometime later, Jesus saw Matthew, a tax collector, sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him. Matthew got up and left everything to follow Jesus. Matthew held a great banquet for Jesus at his house. There was a large crowd of tax collectors and others who were eating with them. The Pharisees and the teachers said to His disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and `sinners'?" Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have come not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

When penitent sinners help penitent sinners, God will bless and forgive. When sin is denied, there is no blessing or forgiveness from God.

Jesus later called His followers to Him and chose twelve to be His disciples. Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

- Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James and John to follow Him.
- Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law as well as many others in the village.
- Jesus called Matthew, a tax collector. He held a banquet for Jesus, where Jesus told the Pharisees that He came to call sinners to repentance, not the righteous.
- The twelve disciples: Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James, Simon, called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot

THE GREAT CATCH OF FISH

Luke 5



Another time while Jesus was standing by the Sea of Galilee, a crowd gathered to see Jesus and to hear Him teach God's word. The crowd became so great that it pushed Him toward the water. He saw two boats beside the fishermen who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats belonging to Peter and began to teach the crowd of people from the boat.

When He had finished speaking, He said to Peter, "Go out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch of fish." Peter answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."

Their nets caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. They called to James and John in the other boat to come and help them. They filled both boats so full that they began to sink. They were all astonished at the catch of fish they had taken.

When Peter saw this, He fell at Jesus' feet and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" Jesus said to Peter, "Don't be afraid. From now on you will catch men."

The disciples pulled their boats up on shore, left everything, and followed Jesus.

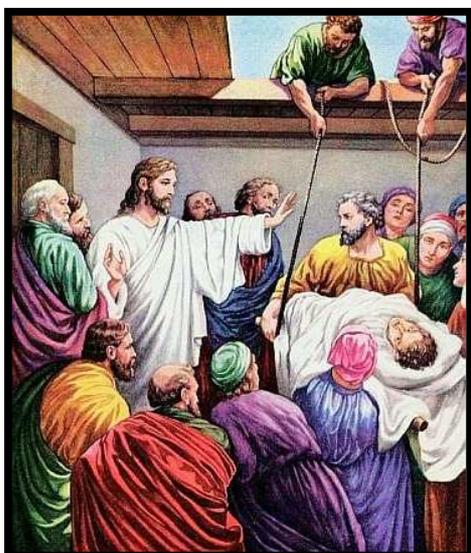
These boats were large enough to carry the disciples and Jesus. There was a small deck in the back of the boat under which one could sleep. It would have taken close to two tons of fish to almost make the boats sink.

Their nets were for dragging over the bottom in shallow water. In deep water, the nets would be open at the bottom. Jesus did not let the fish drop under the net and escape. He caused them to stay caught in the net. The catch was such a great miracle that it filled the disciples with awe and fear.

- Jesus planned this special miracle so He could teach His disciples a lesson.
- The miraculous catch of fish was a picture of the disciples' greater future work. They were to be fishers of men bringing people to know Jesus.

HEALING THE PARALYTIC

Luke 5



Crowds kept following Jesus wherever He went. As Jesus was teaching in a house one day, some men, carrying a paralytic on a mat, tried to take him into the house. There was such a great crowd that they could not get into the house to take their friend to Jesus to be healed. A paralytic is one that can not walk. He always had to have someone carry him or help him.

The friends were determined to take him to Jesus, so they went up on the roof and made a big hole in the tile roof. They put ropes around the man lying on his mat. In this way they could lower him on his mat into the middle of the crowd right in front of Jesus.

When Jesus saw this man who could not walk lying on his mat in front of him, He said, "Man, your sins are forgiven."

The Pharisees and the teachers in the room began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or 'Get up and walk?' But that you may know that the Son of man has the authority on earth to forgive sins, He said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home."

Immediately, he stood up, took up his mat and went home praising God. Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."

- When the men could not take a paralyzed man on a mat into the house where Jesus was, they made a hole in the roof and let the man down in front of Jesus.
- The men showed love to the paralyzed man by using every means to take him to Jesus.
- Jesus said to the man, "Your sins are forgiven. Take up your mat and go home." Jesus showed that the Son of man had the power to forgive sins and to heal.

HEALING THE CENTURION'S SERVANT & RAISING THE WIDOW'S SON AT NAIN

Luke 7



When Jesus came to Capernaum, a Roman centurion sent some Jewish leaders to Him, asking Jesus to heal his servant who was sick and dying. The Jewish leaders praised the centurion because he cared about their nation and had built them a synagogue. Jesus went with them to go to the centurion's house. When the centurion heard this, he sent some friends to Jesus saying, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. Just say the word, and my servant will be healed. I am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes, and that one I tell, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

When Jesus heard this, He marveled at the centurion's faith and said to those with him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith." When the friends returned to the centurion, they found that the servant was healed.

Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain. His disciples and a large crowd of people went with Him. As He came to the town gate, a dead person was being carried out, the only son of his mother who was a widow. A large crowd from the town was following her. When the Jesus saw her, His heart went out to her and He said, "Don't cry." He touched the bier and said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" The dead man sat up and began to talk. Jesus then gave him back to his mother.

The people were filled with awe and praised God. "A great prophet has appeared among us," they said. "God has come to help His people."

- A Roman centurion sent some Jewish leaders to Jesus asking Him to heal his servant. The centurion said he was not worthy to have Jesus come to his house. Jesus only needed to say a word and his servant would be healed. Jesus saw his faith and healed his servant.
- Jesus raised the son of a widow at Nain.
- Jesus shows His love for His people, as He hears their cry and sees their tears. He showed that He is the Lord of life and death. He is the one who can and will dry tears and help them face and overcome their sorrows and trials.

THE SABBATH, GOD'S THANKSGIVING DAY

Matthew 12 John 5



On a Sabbath day, Jesus went into a synagogue and was teaching. A man whose right hand was shriveled was there. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law watched Jesus to see if He would heal on the Sabbath. They asked Jesus if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath? Jesus replied, "Which of you having a sheep that falls into a pit on the Sabbath will not lay hold of it and pick it up?" Then He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." Immediately, his hand was completely healed. The Pharisees and teachers of the

law were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.

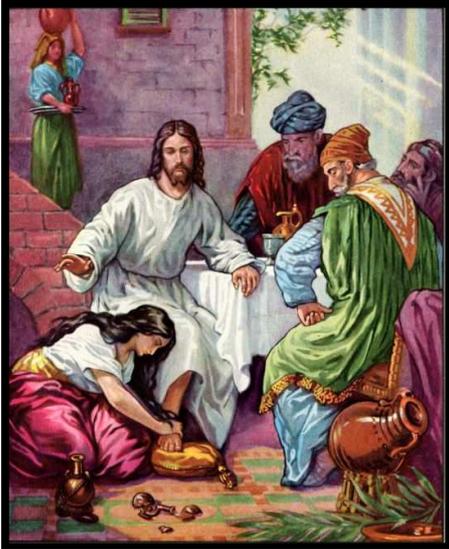
At another time, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. In Jerusalem there was a pool called Bethesda near the Sheep Gate which was surrounded by five covered porches. Here many crippled people would lie waiting for the time when an angel would come down to the pool and stir up the water. Whoever first stepped into the water would be healed of any illness. One man had been lying by the pool for thirty-eight years. Jesus knew he had been lying there a long time. He asked him, "Do you want to get well?" "Sir," he replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes ahead of me." Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." At once the man was cured. He picked up his mat and walked.

This took place on the Sabbath, so the Jews noticed it and said to the man, "It is the Sabbath and the law forbids you to carry your mat." The man replied, "The one who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'" They asked him, "Who was the one who told you to pick it up and walk?" The man did not know, but when he saw Jesus at the temple, he told them that it was Jesus who had made him well. The Jews were angry that Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath. Jesus said to them, "My Father always works to help and restore and I do the same." Then the Jews tried all the harder to kill Him. Not only was He breaking the Sabbath, but He was calling God His Father, making himself equal with God.

- The Jews believed that Jesus' miracles were work, thus breaking the Sabbath law.
- Jesus' miracles were really acts that pointed to Him as the Divine Messiah.
- The miracles were meant to show the love and mercy of God to His people.
- Jesus made it clear that works of mercy on the Sabbath were not forbidden.

THE SINFUL WOMAN

Luke 7



Simon, a Pharisee, invited Jesus to have dinner at his house. So Jesus went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. When a woman who had lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at Simon's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume with her. She stood behind Jesus at His feet weeping, and began to wet His feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and poured perfume on them.

Simon said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman she is. She is a sinner." Jesus said to Simon, "I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," Simon said.

Jesus told him this story. "Two men owed money to a moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, the other fifty denarii. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came to your house, but you did not give me any water for my feet. She has washed my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."

Jesus turned to the woman and said, "Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you; go in peace." The guests said among themselves, "Who is this who forgives sins?"

- At Simon's home, a sinful woman showed her penitence and love by wiping her tears from Jesus' feet with her hair and pouring perfume on them.
- Jesus told a story to let Simon know that the woman's many sins were forgiven, and that she loved much. Simon had shown no love or courtesy to Jesus.
- Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

JOHN THE BAPTIST AND HIS DEATH

Mark 6 Luke 7



While John was in prison, the news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country. John's disciples told him about what Jesus was doing. John sent two of His disciples to Jesus. They said to Jesus, "John the Baptist sent us to ask you, 'Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?'" Jesus had been healing many who had diseases, sicknesses, evil spirits, and giving sight to many who were blind. So He replied to John's messengers, "Go back and report what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is he who is not offended in me." The message was clear,

Jesus was the Messiah. He came to bring the message of God's love and redemption to all people.

Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John after his messengers had left, "What did you go out into the desert to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear expensive clothes are in palaces. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written: 'Behold, I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.' I tell you, among those born of women there is no prophet greater than John the Baptist.

All the people, who had heard and were baptized by John, glorified God. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected God's offer of salvation not listening to John's warning and refusing to be baptized by John.

Herod Antipas of Galilee had ordered John the Baptist to be arrested and put in prison. He did this at the urging of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. Even though she was not divorced, he had married her. John had said to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." This angered Herodias and she wanted John to be killed. Herod feared John and protected him because he knew John was a righteous man.

On his birthday, Herod gave a banquet for his high officials, military commanders, and the leading men of Galilee. The daughter of Herodias came in and danced for their entertainment. She pleased Herod and his guests so much that Herod said to the girl, "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you up to half my kingdom." She went to her mother and asked, "What shall I ask for?" Herodias said, "The head of John the Baptist." The girl hurried in to the king with the request: "I want you to give me the head of John the Baptist on a platter." Herod did not want to grant her request, but because he had given his oath in front of his guests, he did not want to refuse her.

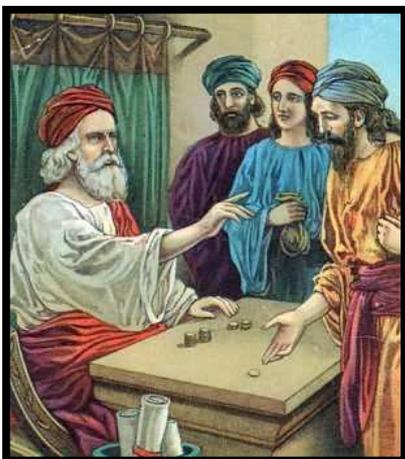
He immediately ordered John to be killed and his head brought to him on a platter. Herod gave it to the girl, and she gave it to Herodias, her mother.

When John's disciples heard this, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb. When Jesus heard about the death of John the Baptist, He and His disciples went by boat to be alone.

- John the Baptist, being in prison, sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus if He was the promised Messiah.
- Jesus testified that He was the Messiah. His miracles proved that He was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah.
- Again Jesus said that John the Baptist was the herald of the Messiah, fulfilling another prophecy of Malachi, that there was no greater prophet than John.
- John's greatness was not just his position, but in the vision he was granted of God's coming work of redemption. He saw more than any other prophet, it's beginning, yet not its fulfillment. Jesus pointed out that any witness of the full work of redemption is greater than John in this respect.
- Herodias, wife of Herod, took the opportunity to have John beheaded when her daughter pleased Herod and his guests with her dancing. Herod kept his vow to grant her wish and ordered the death of John.

GOD GIVES TALENTS TO USE WISELY

Matthew 25



God gave each of us abilities or talents which we are to use to serve and glorify Him. We will have to make a report on how we used the talents we have been given on Judgment Day. Jesus told the following story to teach His followers this lesson.

The kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country. He called his servants to him and put them in charge of his possessions. He gave five talents to one, two talents to another, and to another one talent, every man according to his ability. Then he went on his journey.

The one who received the five talents used his talents and gained another five talents. The one who received two talents also used his talents and gained another two talents. But the one who received one talent dug a hole in the ground and hid his Lord's money.

After a long time, the Lord of those servants returned and asked them to give their report. The one who had received five talents came and brought another five talents, saying, "Lord, you gave me five talents, look, I have gained five more talents." His Lord said to him, "Well done, you are a good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord."

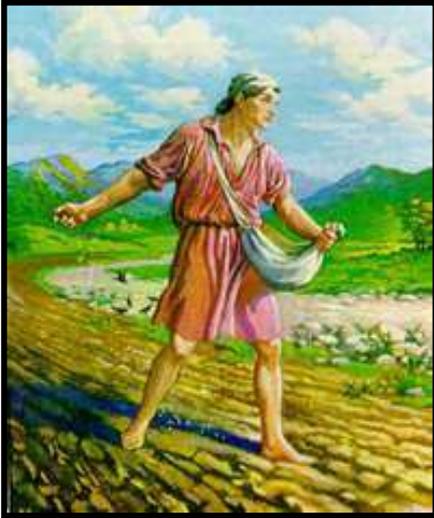
The one who had received two talents came and said, "Lord, you gave me two talents, look, I have gained two more talents." His Lord said to him, "Well done, you are a good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord."

Then the one who had received the one talent came and said, "Lord, I know that you are a hard man, reaping where you have not planted. I was afraid so I hid the talent you gave me in the ground. Here it is. It is yours." His Lord said to him, "You are a wicked and lazy servant. You knew that I reap where I did not plant. You should have put my money to the money lenders or banks. Then when I came I should have received what was mine with interest. Take therefore the talent from him and give it to the one who has ten talents. For unto every one who has shall be given, and he shall have abundance but from him that has not shall be taken away even that which he has. Throw the unprofitable servant into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth"

- Jesus told this story to teach people to use the talents He has given them. They are not to be left unused or invested. We will be judged on Judgment Day.
- Weeping and gnashing of teeth refers to suffering in hell.

THE PARABLE OF THE FARMER SOWING THE SEED

Mark 4



Jesus began to teach by the Sea of Galilee, but the crowd that gathered around Him was so great that He got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake. The people stood on the shore and listened as Jesus taught them many things. This is one of the parables He told them.

“A farmer went out to his field to sow or plant the seeds in the ground. When he was planting, some seeds fell by the way side, and the birds came and ate up the seeds. Some of the seeds fell on rocky ground where there was not much dirt. The seeds quickly came up because they were not deep in the ground. When the sun came up, they dried out and died because they had no roots. Some seeds fell among

weeds, and the weeds quickly grew up and choked out the seedlings. Some seeds fell on good ground. They grew and produced a good crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times.”

When Jesus was alone with his disciples, He explained the meaning of the parable. Jesus said, “The farmer sows his seed, just like the Word of God comes to people. Some people are like the seeds that fell along the path. When the Word comes to them, as soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the Word that was planted in their hearts. So they do not believe. Others are like the seeds planted on rocky places. They hear the Word and receive it with joy. But since they have no root in themselves, it lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes, they quickly fall away. Still others, like seeds planted among thorns, receive the Word gladly, but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the desire for other things grows in them and crowds the Word out of the person. Others, like seeds planted in good soil, hear the Word of God, believe it, and produce a good crop, thirty, sixty or even a hundred times more.”

- A parable is an earthly story with a spiritual or heavenly meaning. In teaching, Jesus often spoke in parables. Believers could understand the spiritual meaning.
- The seeds are fed by God’s Word. When they fall on a hard path, Satan comes and takes away God’s Word. When they fall on rocky soil, they come up, but the trials of life kill them. When they fall among weeds, God’s Word is choked out by many things. The seeds on good ground believe God’s Word and bear much fruit.
- As God’s children, we dare not have a hard heart, lest Satan takes away our faith, or the world chokes out our faith. Let us produce a good crop in our lives.

PARABLE ON THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Matthew 13



Once when Jesus was teaching a large crowd of people, He told this parable. “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who planted good seed in his wheat field. While everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and planted weeds among the wheat. When the wheat sprouted and grew, the weeds grew, too. The owner’s servants asked him, ‘Sir, didn’t you plant good seed in your wheat field? Where did the weeds come from?’”

“An enemy has done this,” he replied. The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to pull up the weeds?’ ‘No,’ he said, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may pull up the wheat, too. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvester, ‘First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles and burn them. Then gather the

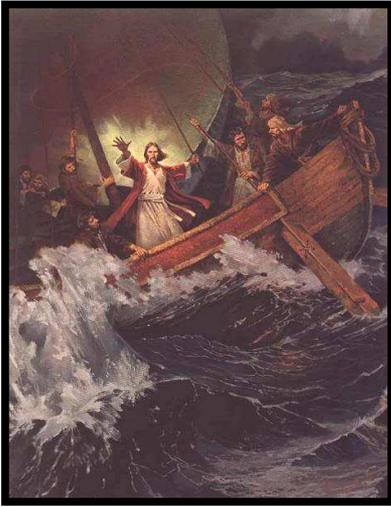
wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

When Jesus left the crowd, His disciples said to him, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the wheat field." He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of man or Jesus. The field is the world, and the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom or believers. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who planted them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the world, and the harvesters are the angels. As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the world. The Son of man will send out His angels, and they will take out of His kingdom all things that cause sin and all those who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Because of sin, people insist on their rights to think, say, or do as they please. They try to get others to live as they do. Christians must try to be like Jesus sharing God’s many blessings, bringing people to Jesus, and remaining faithful to their Lord and Savior.

- This parable deals with believers and unbelievers at the end of the world.
- The wheat field is like the world which has in it both believers in Jesus and unbelievers. Believers are the good seed.
- On Judgment Day, angels will divide the believers from the unbelievers. The unbelievers will go to Hell. The believers will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

JESUS STILLS THE STORM – HEALS THE MAN POSSESSED BY DEVILS
Luke 8



After teaching a great crowd all day by the seashore, Jesus said to His disciples, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." Leaving the crowd behind, they got into the boat and headed across the Sea of Galilee. A furious storm came up, and the waves broke over the boat so that it was about to sink. Jesus was sleeping in the back of the boat. In great fear, the disciples woke Him and said, "Master, don't you care if we drown?" Jesus got up and spoke to the wind and the waves, saying, "Be still!" Then the wind was suddenly gone, the huge waves stopped, and it was completely calm. Jesus said to His disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" They asked each other, "Who is this that even the wind and the waves obey Him?"

They crossed the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. When Jesus got out of the boat, a man possessed by devils came to meet Him. He wore no clothes and lived in the tombs. He had often been captured by force and chained hand and foot, but the devils gave him great strength and he tore the chains apart. Day and night he would cry out and cut himself with stones. When he saw Jesus, he ran to Him and fell on his knees. The devil shouted, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Do not torture me!" Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" The evil spirit answered, "My name is Legion, for there are many of us."

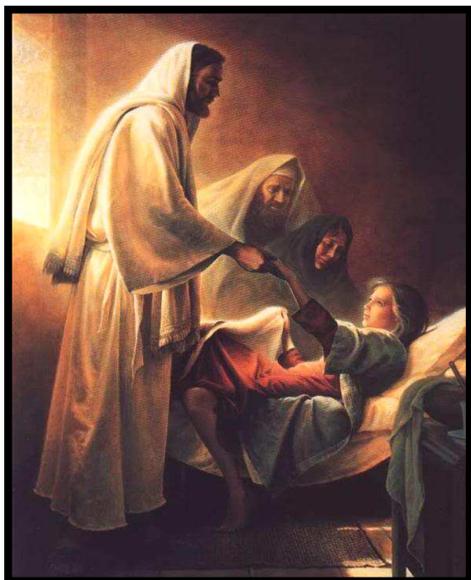
A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. The devils begged Jesus, "Send us into the pigs." Jesus gave His permission, and the evil spirits went into the pigs. The pigs, about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank and were drowned in the lake. Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town. Many people came to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the evil spirits sitting there, dressed and in his right mind. The people were so afraid that they asked Jesus to leave.

The man who had the devils sent out of him begged to go with Jesus. But Jesus said to him, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you." He became a missionary for Jesus and people marveled at his story.

- Jesus showed His disciples that He had power over the wind and waves. They should not be afraid.
- Jesus healed the man possessed by devils and sent the many devils into a herd of pigs. It was God's judgment on the Jewish owners. Pigs were unclean according to God's Law and not to be eaten or used for sacrifice or for making money.
- Even the evil angels or devils know that Jesus is the Son of God.
- Jesus told the healed man to go home and be a witness to Him.

THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS RAISED FROM THE DEAD

Mark 5 Luke 8



When Jesus had crossed by boat to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, a large crowd gathered around Him. Out of the crowd, Jairus, one of the synagogue rulers, came to Jesus. Falling at His feet he pleaded, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." So Jesus went with him.

A large crowd followed and pressed around Jesus. A woman was there who had been sick for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind Him and touched His robe. She thought, "If I just touch His clothes, I will be healed." Immediately, she was healed. Jesus turned around and asked, "Who

touched me?" His disciples answered, "People are crowding against you, and you ask, 'Who touched me?'" The woman came and fell at His feet trembling with fear. She told Him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be free from your suffering."

While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, saying, "Your daughter is dead. Why bother the teacher any more?" Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe."

When they came to the home, Jesus heard the people crying. Among the Jews, there were professional mourners who were paid to cry at deaths and funerals. Jesus said to them, "Why all this crying? The child is not dead but asleep." Hearing this, they laughed at Him. Jesus sent them all out of the house. He took the child's father, mother, Peter, James, and John and went in where the child was lying. He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!" The girl stood up and walked around. She was twelve years old. Jesus told them to give her something to eat. All were completely astonished that Jesus had brought her back to life.

- One woman in the crowd of people was healed by touching Jesus' robe.
- Jesus brought Jairus' daughter back to life.
- Wherever Jesus went He showed that He was the Messiah and the Lord of life and death. He strengthens our faith through our trials in life and teaches us patience.

FEEDING THE FIVE THOUSAND

Matthew 14 Mark 6 John 6



Near the Sea of Galilee a large crowd gathered to hear Jesus and have their sick healed. Toward evening, Jesus, looking over the great crowd, asked Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" Philip answered, "Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" Andrew spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." This boy's lunch indicates that he came from a poor family, for the poor used barley to make bread.

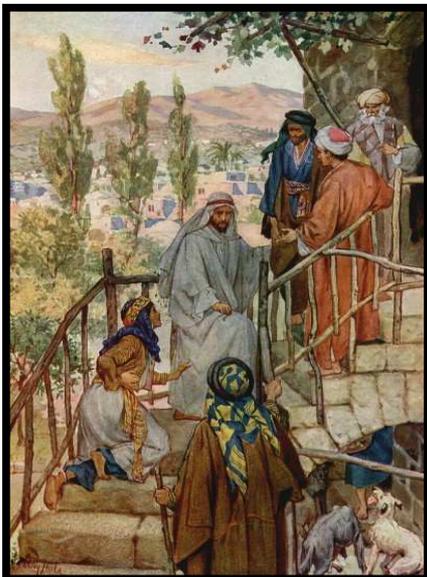
There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand, not counting women and children. Jesus took the five small loaves of bread, gave thanks, and had the disciples pass the bread out to everyone. Jesus did the same with the fish. When they had all had enough to eat, He said to His disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." Each of the twelve disciples filled their hand basket with the pieces of bread and fish which were left after all had eaten. Imagine how this miracle affected the thoughts and the faith of the boy.

When the people saw this miracle, they said, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." Jesus, knowing that the people and now the disciples, too, wanted to make Him a "bread king," He ordered His disciples to get into the boat and go to the other side of the lake while He sent the people away. Then He went up on a mountainside to pray. When evening came, and the boat was still a long distance from land, Jesus had a bad storm come to strengthen His disciples' faith and knowledge. All night, Jesus let them fight the storm. Just as it was beginning to get light, Jesus walked to them on the water. When the tired and frightened disciples saw Jesus walking on the water, they were terrified and cried out in fear, "It's a ghost." Jesus said to them, "Don't be afraid. It is I." Peter called, "Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water." "Come," Jesus said. Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. But when he felt the wind and saw the large waves, he took his mind off of Jesus and began to sink. He cried out, "Lord, save me!" Jesus reached out His hand, caught him, and said, "Oh, you of little faith, why did you doubt?" When Jesus and Peter climbed into the boat, suddenly the wind and waves were gone and the boat was at the shore. The disciples in amazement said, "Truly you are the Son of God."

- Jesus fed the five thousand with five small barley loaves and two small fish. The people wanted to make Him a "bread king."
- To teach His disciples Jesus sent a bad storm.
- When Jesus told Peter to come to him, Peter became afraid and began to sink.
- The disciples marveled at the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus walking on the water, and the boat being immediately at land.

THE SYRO-PHOENICIAN WOMAN

Matthew 15



Leaving Galilee, Jesus went to the Gentile country of Tyre and Sidon. His presence there soon became known. A Gentile woman, Syro-Phoenician by birth, who had come to believe in Jesus as the Messiah, hurried to meet Him. Her daughter was possessed by a devil. When she came to Jesus, she fell at His feet and prayed, “Have mercy on me, Oh Lord, Son of David.” In these words, she showed that she believed that Jesus was the promised Messiah or Savior sent to bring salvation to the world. Jesus’ fame, mercy, and power had caused her to believe in Him.

Strangely, Jesus said nothing to her. She kept crying and pleading until the disciples complained and asked Jesus to send her away. Jesus spoke what seemed to be harsh words to her. “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.” He was saying that

He had been sent to Israel, the Jews. She knelt in worship and simply said, “Lord, help me.”

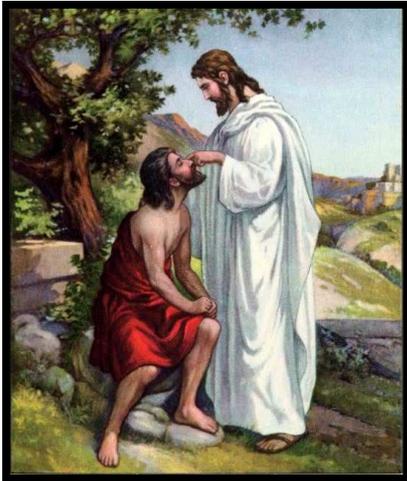
Again Jesus spoke seemingly harsh words. “It is not right to take the children’s bread and to throw it to the dogs.” He was referring to Israel as God’s special people or house where His mercy and salvation was their spiritual food by right as His children. She was a Gentile, outside the house of Israel, sometimes called “dogs” by the Jews.

Her faith in God’s mercy caused her to humbly say, “That’s true, Lord, but the household dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the table.” Jesus was very pleased and said, “Oh, woman, your faith is great. Go home, the devil has gone out of your daughter.” She returned home and found that the devil had gone out of her daughter as Jesus had said.

- A Gentile, known as the Syro-Phoenician woman, came in faith to Jesus begging Him to heal her daughter possessed by a devil.
- Jesus tested her faith by saying that He had been sent to the Jews and it was not right to give their food to Gentiles, sometimes called “dogs.”
- She replied in faith, that though she was a Gentile, she was still of the household of faith, and only was asking for the crumbs from the table. Jesus commended her for her faith and healed her daughter.
- From this story, we see that Jesus’ salvation and mercy is for all people.

JESUS HEALS THE DEAF AND BLIND & FEEDING OF THE FOUR THOUSAND

Mark 7, 8



Wherever Jesus went He performed miracles. One day some people brought to Him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk. They begged Jesus to place His hand on the man. Jesus took the man away from the crowd and put His fingers into the man's ears. Then He spit and touched the man's tongue. He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" which means, "Be opened!" Immediately, the man could hear and he began to speak plainly. The people were amazed and said, "He has done everything well. He makes the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak."

Again, a blind man was brought to Jesus and begged Jesus to touch Him. Jesus took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When He had spit on the man's eyes and put His hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?" The man looked up and said, "I see people. They look like trees walking around." Once more Jesus put His hands on the man's eyes. Then he could see clearly.

During those days another large crowd gathered around Jesus. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples to Him and said, "I feel sorry for all these people. They have been with me three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come from far away." His disciples answered, "But where in this far away place can we get enough bread to feed them?" "How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked. "Seven," they replied. Jesus told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When He had taken the seven loaves of bread and had given thanks, He broke them and gave them to His disciples to pass out among the people. They, also, had a few small sun-dried fish. Jesus gave thanks for them and told the disciples to distribute the fish. All the people ate and were satisfied. After everyone had eaten, the disciples picked up seven lunch bags of pieces that were left over. About four thousand men were present, as well as women and children.

- When the people said, "He has done everything well. He makes the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak." they were referring to the words in the Old Testament about the coming Messiah. Wherever Jesus went He performed miracles.
- The feeding of the four thousand with seven loaves of bread and a few small fish was the second miracle of feeding a great crowd of people.

THE TRANSFIGURATION

Matthew 16, 17 Mark 9 Luke 8, 9



Not long after the feeding of the four thousand, Jesus came to Caesarea Philippi and asked the people and His disciples who they thought He was. Peter, answering for the disciples, said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." When Jesus began talking about His coming suffering and death in Jerusalem, Peter told Him not to talk about such things. Jesus rebuked Peter sharply saying, "Get behind me, Satan for you do not know the things of God." He told the disciples that if they wanted to follow Him, they would have to take up their cross and follow Him.

Sometime later, Jesus took Peter, James, and John up a high mountain about ten miles away to be by themselves to pray. As Jesus prayed, His disciples fell asleep. Suddenly, Jesus was transfigured. His face became bright as the sun and His clothes became pure white and glistened. Two of the greatest prophets, Moses and Elijah, appeared and talked with Jesus about His death which He was soon to undergo in Jerusalem.

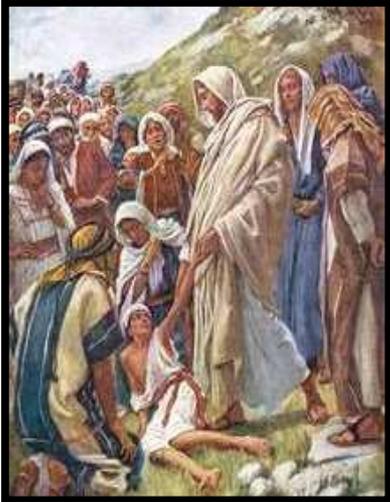
As Peter, James, and John woke up, they saw Jesus transfigured and heard Him talking to the two men who stood with Him about His death in Jerusalem. As Moses and Elijah were leaving, Peter overcome with awe said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three tabernacles--one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." While Peter was saying this, the Shekinah, the Cloud of God's Glory, came and covered them. They were terrified as they entered the Cloud and fell on their faces to the ground. The voice from God the Father came out of the Cloud saying, "This is my beloved Son, hear Him."

When the voice had stopped, they looked around. The Cloud was gone and they saw only Jesus. As they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen until the Son of man had risen from the dead. They told no one what had happened, but they wondered what the rising from the dead meant.

- Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James, and John, probably on Mt. Hermon.
- Jesus spoke to Moses and Elijah about His coming death.
- Peter, not really knowing what he was saying, wanted to build three tabernacles there for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah.
- God the Father spoke from the Cloud of His Glory, called the Shekinah in the Old Testament, saying, "This is my beloved Son, hear Him."
- Jesus told them not to speak of this until after He had risen from the dead.
- Peter spoke of this marvelous event in 2 Peter 1:16-18.

A BOY POSSESSED BY AN EVIL SPIRIT

Mark 9



After the transfiguration, Jesus with Peter, James, and John, came down from the mountain to His waiting disciples. A great crowd and Scribes were arguing with the disciples. He asked the Scribes what they were discussing. A father from the crowd answered and said, "Teacher, I brought my son who is possessed by an evil spirit and can not speak. The evil spirit seizes him and throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not." Jesus said, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? Bring the boy to me."

When they brought the boy to Jesus, the evil spirit saw Jesus and threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell on the ground foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood," he answered. "The evil spirit has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. Take pity on us and help us."

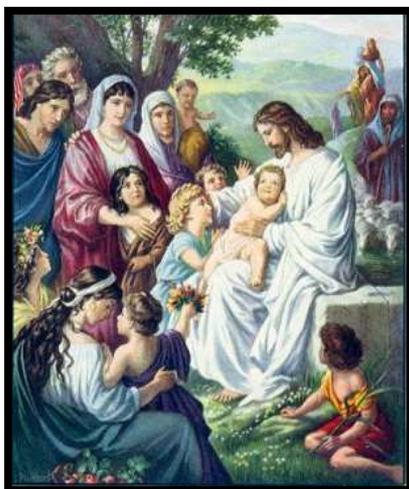
Jesus said, "If you can believe, all things are possible for him who believes." The boy's father cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" Jesus rebuked the evil spirit saying, "You deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again." The spirit shrieked and violently came out. The boy looked like he was dead and many said, "He's dead." But Jesus took him by the hand, lifted him up, and he stood on his feet.

Jesus' disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive him out?" Jesus replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer and fasting."

- A father showed his great love for his son. When the evil spirit would throw the boy into the fire or water, the father would rescue him.
- Jesus asked the father if he believed. He said, "I believe, help my unbelief."
- Jesus heard the father's plea for help and drove the evil spirit out of the boy.

JESUS BLESSES THE CHILDREN

Matthew 18, 19



Some parents tried to bring their little children to Jesus to have Him touch and bless them, but the disciples said to the mothers and fathers, “Don’t bother Jesus.” When Jesus saw this, He was very displeased. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” He took the children in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them.

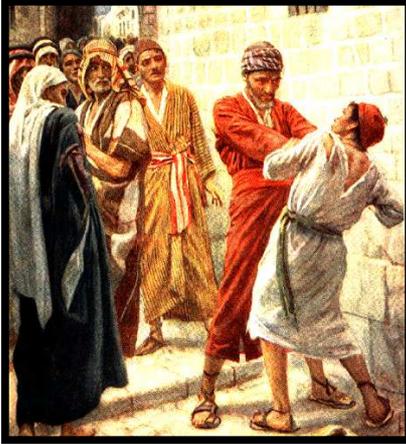
Jesus showed His love for children by using a child as an example to instruct His disciples.

The disciples asked Jesus, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” In answer, Jesus called a little child to Him and said, “Unless you become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven and whoever welcomes a little child in my name welcomes me. He who receives a little child in my name receives me. But who offends one of these little ones who believes in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea.”

“Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I say unto you, in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. The Son of man is come to save that which was lost. It is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”

- When parents brought their children to Jesus, the disciples said Jesus should not be bothered. Jesus rebuked the disciples and blessed the children.
- Jesus instructed His disciples in humility and in loving and caring for the little children. He said, “Let the little children come to me.”
- Jesus sharply warned about hurting the faith of a child.
- Showing love to a little child is showing love for Jesus.

HOW OFTEN SHALL I FORGIVE? Matthew 18



The Jews taught that people should forgive someone three times. If they forgave seven times, they were forgiving much more than necessary. Peter came to Jesus with a question about forgiving. He asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven." There should be no limit to forgiving. God must be our example, for in Christ, He forgives all sins.

To teach forgiveness, Jesus told another parable. He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. He began the settling with a man who owed him a great amount of money, ten thousand talents or about \$15,000,000 in today's figures. Since his servant was not able to pay, the master ordered that he, his wife, his children, and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. "The servant fell on his knees and begged, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay back everything.' The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt, and let him go."

"When that servant left, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him just a little money, a hundred denarii or about \$15. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me,' he demanded. His servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' But the man refused and had him thrown into prison until he could pay the debt."

"When the other servants saw what had happened, they were displeased and told their master everything that had happened. Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant, I canceled all your debt because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had mercy on you?' In anger his master turned him over to the jailers until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

- Jesus showed in His parable that we are to forgive as our Heavenly Father forgives us in His mercy. If we do not forgive, God's judgment will fall on us.
- When we pray in the Lord's Prayer and say, "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us," we should mean it and practice forgiving.

JESUS TEACHES ABOUT MARRIAGE AND RICHES

Matthew 19



One time some Pharisees came to Jesus to see if they could trap Him in saying something wrong about marriage and divorce. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" Jesus answered, "In the beginning God made them male and female and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife. The two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

Then they asked Jesus, "Why then did Moses command that a man could give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?" Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery." The Pharisees went away when Jesus gave this answer.

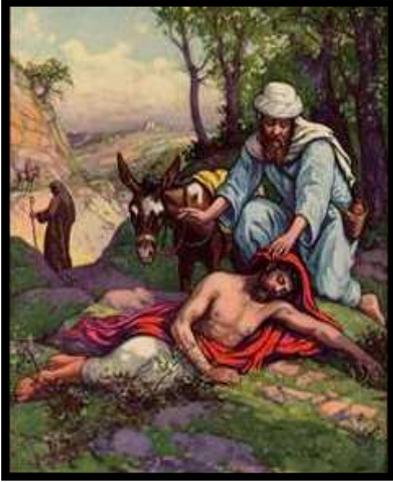
As Jesus continued on His way, a rich young man ran up to him, fell on his knees before him, and said, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit everlasting life?" "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good except God. You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not cheat, honor your father and mother.'" The man said, "Teacher, I have kept all these commandments since I was a boy." Jesus said, "One thing you lack. Go, sell everything you have, give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me." At this, the man went away sad, because he was very wealthy.

Jesus said to His disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." The disciples were surprised and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Peter said to him, "We have left everything to follow you!" Jesus replied, "Anyone who has left home for me and the gospel will receive many, many blessings here on earth and will inherit everlasting life."

- Jesus said that a marriage should not be broken.
- Moses granted a divorce because their heart was hard. This still holds true today.
- Jesus said that it is hard for a rich man to inherit everlasting life, because such a man often loves money more than God and wants to do as He pleases.
- Those who follow Jesus will be blessed and will inherit everlasting life.

THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Luke 10



A lawyer, who was an expert in the Law, asked Jesus, “Master, what shall I do to inherit everlasting life?” Jesus answered, “What is written in the Law?” The lawyer answering said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus replied, “You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live.” The lawyer wanting to justify himself said to Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?”

In reply, Jesus told this parable. "A man was going from Jerusalem to Jericho when he fell into the hands of robbers. They took off his clothes, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest was going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. Then a Levite came by and saw him lying there. He, too, passed by on the other side."

“But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was lying. When he saw him, he felt sorry for him. He bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn, and took care of him. Before he left the next day, he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him, and when I return, I will repay you for any extra expense you may have.’”

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The lawyer replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Our faith, like a light, must be seen. No one lights a candle or a lamp and then covers or hides it. Jesus says, “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Matthew 5:16

- The parable teaches a lesson about caring for our neighbor and showing mercy. Only a Samaritan, a Gentile, showed mercy and cared for the man.
- The way we live shows that we are followers of Jesus and that God’s light shines in us like a candle. In love and mercy, we should help one another.

THE RICH MAN & WATCH AND BE READY

Luke 12



One day someone in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." Jesus replied, "Be careful! Do not be greedy. It is not important how much a man possesses."

Then He told them this parable. "The ground of a certain rich man produced a very good crop. He thought, 'What shall I do? I have no room to store all my crops.' Then he said, 'I know what I will do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones.

Then I will have room to store all my grain and my goods. I will say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink, and be merry.'"

"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night you will die, then who will get everything you have?' This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself on earth but is not rich toward God."

Then Jesus said to His disciples: "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will wear. Life is more than food and clothes. Which one of you can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? Do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink and do not worry about it. The world is concerned about all these things. Your Father knows what you need. Seek His kingdom, and these things will be given to you, also."

"Always be prepared to meet Jesus, keep your lamp of faith burning, waiting for your Lord to return. It will be good for those servants whose Lord finds them ready when He comes, even if He comes late at night. Understand this, if the owner of a house knew when a thief was coming, he would not let his house be broken into. You must always be ready, because the Son of man will come when you do not expect Him."

- Jesus said, "Don't be greedy. Don't put your trust in earthly possessions." When you die, you will leave everything you have to others.
- Don't worry about earthly things – seek what is heavenly, the Kingdom of God.
- Watch and be ready. The Son of man will come on Judgment Day when He is not expected.

THE PENNY OF LIFE

Matthew 20



As the end of Jesus' ministry drew near, Jesus told another parable about the Kingdom of Heaven to show that work needs to be done by all in His Kingdom. The payment for service is given by God, not man, neither is it open to the desires or thoughts of man.

In this parable a landowner goes out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. He said that he would pay them a penny for the day's work. About the third hour he saw some standing in the marketplace doing nothing and he told them to go and work in his vineyard. He said that he would pay them what is right. Again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour he told others to go and work, he would pay them what was right. Finally, about the eleventh hour he went out and found still others. He told them the same thing, "Go and work in my vineyard and I will pay you what is right."

When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, "Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired." The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and each received a penny for an hour of work. When those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more, but each received a penny. They complained and said to the owner, "The men who were hired last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have worked all day in the heat."

The owner of the vineyard answered, "Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a penny? Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my money? Are you jealous because I am generous? The last will be first, and the first will be last."

- God's vineyard is like the church and living your life in faith. The "penny of life" is the payment of life in heaven with our Lord and Savior.
- Whether we come to faith as a child and serve Jesus all our life, or we come to faith late in life and serve Him only a short time, the payment is the same.
- God says, "Be faithful to death and I will give you the crown of life." Rev.2:10

THE WEDDING FEAST - THE BANQUET

Luke 14



People love to go to banquets. They feel honored when they are invited to be where the rich, powerful, or famous are present. They want to sit close to the head table and be noticed. When Jesus saw how the guests at a banquet tried to pick the places of honor at the table, He said to them, "When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person who is more important than you may have been invited. If so, the host will come to you and say, 'Give this man your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. When you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in front of all the other guests. Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Jesus said, "When you give a dinner, do not invite your friends, your relatives, or your rich neighbors. If you do, they may invite you back so that you are repaid. But when you give a dinner, invite the poor, the crippled, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Jesus told a parable teaching that God's banquet of salvation in Jesus must always come first. "A man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. When the banquet was ready, he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, everything is ready.' But they all began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.' Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, please excuse me.' "Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'"

"The servant came back and reported this to his master, who became angry and said, 'Go out in the streets of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, and the blind' " "Sir, the servant said, 'I have done that, but there is still room.' Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and highways and make them come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'"

- Jesus said to be humble, not proud.
- Jesus said that when you have a dinner, invite those who can not repay you.
- God has invited all people to His banquet of salvation through faith in Jesus. If we ignore His invitation or refuse it, He will reject and condemn us.

THE PRODIGAL SON

Luke 15



There was a man who had two sons. The younger son said to his father, “Father, give me my share of the inheritance.” It was customary for the elder son to receive two thirds and the younger son one-third of the inheritance. Accordingly, the father divided his property between his two sons. The younger son took his money and went to a far off country where he wasted his money in wild living. After all his money was gone, he got a job feeding pigs. He was so hungry he was jealous of the pigs and the husks they ate.

Finally, he thought of his home and how all the hired men of his father had more than enough food to eat. He thought, “I am starving to death! I will go back to my father and say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me one of your hired men.’” So he started home to his father.

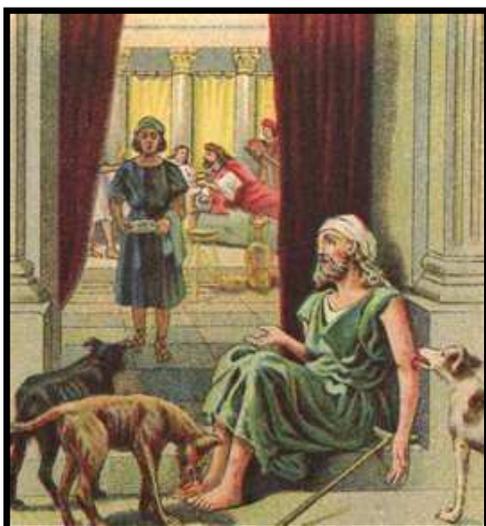
While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with love for him. He ran to his son, threw his arms around him, and kissed him. The son said, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.” But the father said to his servants, “Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. My son was dead but now he is alive. He was lost and now he is found.”

When the older son returned from working in the field, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. “Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has made a feast so we can celebrate that his son is back home safe and sound.’” The older brother became angry and would not go in. His father went out and pleaded with him. He said to his father, “All these years I’ve worked for you. I have never disobeyed your orders. You never gave me a feast so I could celebrate with my friends. Now you made a feast for this son of yours who has wasted all his inheritance!” “My son,” the father said, “you are always with me. Everything I have is yours. But we needed to celebrate, because your brother was dead and now he is alive. He was lost and now he is found.”

- The father’s younger son foolishly took his inheritance, left home and wasted all his money with wild living. In penitence, he returned home asking to be a servant.
- His father received him with joy and love and prepared a celebration for him.
- The older son was jealous.
- Our Father in Heaven forgives the sins of penitent sinners.
- When new people or known sinners come to church or to faith, we should rejoice and receive them in love.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

Luke 16, 17



In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus again showed that there is a day of accounting and judgment before God after this life.

“A man named Lazarus lay at a rich man’s gate wanting to eat what fell from the rich man's table. He was covered with sores and the dogs came and licked his sores. The rich man did nothing to help poor Lazarus. Finally, Lazarus died and went to heaven.”

“The rich man also died and went to hell. In hell, he looked up and saw Abraham with Lazarus by his side in heaven. He called out, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to

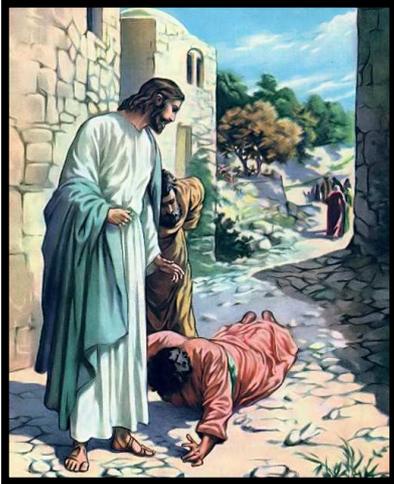
dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am tormented in this fire.’ But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received good things, while Lazarus received bad things. Now he is comforted and you are tormented. No one can go from heaven to hell or from hell to heaven.’ He answered, ‘Then send Lazarus to my father's house to warn my five brothers, so they will not come to this place of torment.’ Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ ‘No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ Abraham said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, they will not believe even if one rises from the dead.’”

“As it was in the days of Noah, it will be like that in the days of the Son of man. People were eating, drinking, and getting married until the day Noah went into the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But when Lot left Sodom, fire and brimstone came down and destroyed them all. It will be like this on the day the Son of man returns to the earth.”

- The rich man did not help poor Lazarus who laid at his gate. When Lazarus died, he was blessed and comforted in heaven. When the rich man died, he lost everything and was condemned and tormented in hell.
- No one can go from heaven to hell or from hell to heaven. Judgment is final.
- Those who refuse to believe the Word of God and reject His salvation will receive God’s condemnation when they die.

JESUS HEALS THE LEPERS

Matthew 8 Mark 1 Luke 5 & 17



Leprosy is a terrible disease. In the Old Testament and in Jesus' day, lepers were feared and forced to stay away from people. A leper would be pronounced "unclean" by the priests and would have to live and die with other lepers. Lepers lived in little groups or colonies, and begged people to set out food so they could live. They made their homes in caves, tombs, or abandoned places. They had to call out "unclean, unclean" whenever someone came near. According to God's Law, a leper had to be pronounced "clean" by the priest before he could again live with people.

In the New Testament it is interesting to note the lepers believed that Jesus was the Divine Messiah. Throughout Jesus' ministry, He healed many lepers. Jesus was not afraid of being near them or touching them. One time a leper came to Him saying, "Lord, if it is your will, you can make me clean." Jesus reached out to him and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." Immediately, the leprosy left him. Jesus told the man to tell no one, but to show himself to the priest.

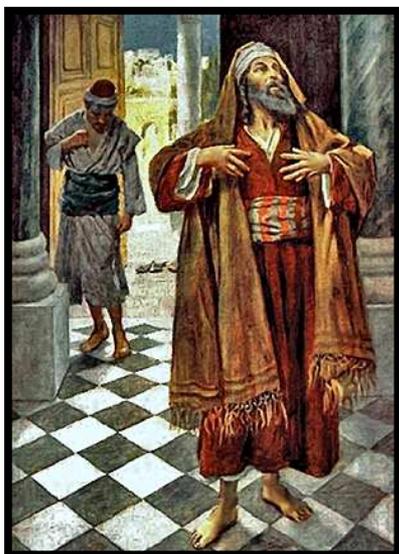
As part of their training, Jesus sent the twelve disciples on a mission tour giving them special powers. He said to them, "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely you have received, freely give."

In another story, known as the "healing of the ten lepers," a group of ten lepers called out to Jesus for help. In this story, Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem. He came to a village where He met ten men who stood far away from Him. They cried out in loud voices, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." When He came near them, He said, "Go show yourselves to the priests." As they walked away, they saw that their leprosy had left them. One of them, a Samaritan, turned back and with a loud voice glorified God. He fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving Him thanks. Jesus said, "Weren't ten men cleansed? Where are the nine? Only this foreigner has returned to give glory to God." Jesus said to him, "Arise, go your way, your faith has made you well."

- There was no cure for leprosy, so lepers were forced to live away from people.
- The Old Testament records the healing of two lepers: Miriam and Naaman.
- When a leper was healed, a priest had to pronounce him "clean."
- When ten lepers were healed, only one, a Samaritan returned to give thanks to Jesus.

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN

Luke 18



To some who were proud of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, like the Pharisees, Jesus told this parable which shows human beings at their worst and best before God.

"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself. He said in pride, "God, I thank you that I am not like other men, robbers, evildoers, and adulterers, or even like the tax collector over there. I fast twice a week, and I give a tenth of all I possess."

"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat upon his chest and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' I tell you that this man went home justified before God. Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

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John writes of the necessity of Jesus' love and forgiveness in the following beautiful words. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. My little children, I am writing these things to you, that you do not sin. If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the payment for our sin and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." 1 John 1:7-2:2 NJKV

- In pride, the Pharisee boasted that he was not like other men, doing more than the Law required in his tithes and fasting. God only required a tithe from crops of grain, fruit, and livestock. The Pharisee boasted that he gave a tithe of everything he possessed. Fasting was for vows or special times of penitence and prayer.
- In humility, the Publican asked God for mercy, because he was a sinner.
- Scripture tells us that all men have sinned, but Jesus has paid for our sins, and in Him we find mercy and forgiveness. We have no reason to be proud of ourselves.

FORGIVENESS OF SIN & OFFERING OF LOVE

John 8 Mark 12



Early one morning, Jesus was in the temple courts with the people gathered around Him. The teachers of the Law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand in front of them and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery. In the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. What do you say?" They were using this question as a trap in order to have a reason to accuse Him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with His finger. When they kept on questioning him, He stood up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. Those who heard Jesus began to go away, until only Jesus was left with the woman. Jesus stood up and asked her, "Woman, where are the ones who accused you? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. Jesus said to her, "Then I do not condemn you either. Go and sin no more."

Jesus taught much about being kind and merciful because of God's love and forgiveness. This woman received Jesus' love, mercy, and encouragement even though people looked on her as a great sinner.

Another time at the temple, Jesus sat opposite the place where the offerings were put into the temple treasury. He saw many rich people of high standing throw in large amounts of money. It was obvious when a large amount was given because the coins were dropped into a large metal horn. As the coins fell in, they made a clanging noise that could be easily heard. In this way the rich people made a show of their great offerings.

Then along came a poor widow who put in two mites, worth only a fraction of a penny. Those coins would only have made a faint sound. Nobody heard anything, neither did they think her offering was of any importance. Jesus called His disciples to Him and said, "This poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, gave everything she had." She never knew it, but her Lord and Savior was very pleased with her offering, and praised her highly to His disciples.

- The woman caught in adultery received Jesus' forgiveness and mercy, while those who accused her saw her only as a great sinner.
- The rich people made a show of their giving. The poor widow out of love gave all she had. Jesus sees when the heart is full of faith, penitence, and love. It is not the amount, but what the heart of the believer offers.
- Because of Jesus' love and mercy, our offerings are part of our worship and should be given out of love for Him.

HEALING THE MAN BORN BLIND

John 9



As Jesus walked along, He saw a man who had been born blind. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," Jesus replied.

Jesus spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, put it on the man's eyes, and told him to go and wash in the Pool of Siloam. When the man washed in the pool, he could see. His neighbors and

those who had seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?" Some said he was and others said it only looked like him. But he said, "I am the man." "How were your eyes opened that now you can see?" they demanded. He replied, "The man called Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes and told me to go to Siloam and wash. Now I can see." "Where is this man?" they asked. "I don't know," he answered. Then they took him to the Pharisees.

It was the Sabbath when Jesus had healed the man's eyes. The Pharisees asked him how he had received his sight. The man replied, "He put mud on my eyes, I washed, and now I see." Some of them said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." Others asked, "How can a sinner do such a miracle?" Finally, they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him?" The man replied, "He is a prophet."

The Pharisees still did not believe he had been blind, so they sent for the man's parents and asked, "Is this your son who was born blind? How is it that now he can see?" They answered, "We know he is our son, and that he was born blind, but we do not know how he can see. Ask him. He can speak for himself." His parents were afraid, because the Jews said that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. A second time they asked him. "Give glory to God. We know this man is a sinner." He replied, "Whether He is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind and now I see!" Again they asked him, "How did he open your eyes?" He answered, "I have told you already. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become His disciples, too?" Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't know where he comes from."

The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where He comes from, yet He opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners. If this man were not from God, He could do nothing." To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out of the synagogue.

Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when He found him, He said, "Do you believe in the Son of man?" "Who is he, sir? Tell me so that I may believe in Him." Jesus said, "You have now seen Him. He is the one speaking with you." The man said, "Lord, I believe."

Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." Some Pharisees heard Him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind, too?" Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains."

- The Jews taught that if someone had something physically wrong it was because his parents or he had sinned. Jesus said that neither his parents or the man had sinned causing him to be born blind.
- The Pharisees did not want to believe that Jesus had performed this miracle of giving sight to this man on the Sabbath. They finally put him out of the temple taking away his rights to worship in the temple.
- When Jesus asked the man if he believed He was the Son of man, the Messiah, the man replied, "Lord, I believe."
- Jesus pointed out that the Pharisees were spiritually blind and guilty before God.

ZACCHAEUS AND BARTIMAEUS

Luke 18 Mark 10



One day a man named Zacchaeus, who lived in Jericho, heard that Jesus was going to be passing through Jericho. He was chief among the publicans, a tax collector, very rich, and called a sinner by the people. He wanted to see Jesus, but there was a large crowd, and he could not see over them because he was a short man. So he ran ahead of the crowd and climbed into a sycamore or fig tree. Although Zacchaeus did not know it, he was one of the reasons Jesus came to Jericho that day. When Jesus came to the place where Zacchaeus was sitting in the tree, He said, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down because I am staying at your house today.”

Zacchaeus came down and joyfully received Jesus. The people who saw this said, “He has gone to be a guest in the house of a sinner.” At the home after talking to Jesus, Zacchaeus came to faith, stood up, and said, “Behold, Lord, I will give half of my possessions to the poor. If I have cheated any man, I will pay back four times the amount.”

Jesus was pleased and said to him, “This day salvation has come to this house. He, also, is a child of Abraham by race and by faith. The Son of man is come to seek and to save those who are lost.” Jesus then decided to leave Jericho because there was someone else He wanted to see.

As Jesus was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, they met Bartimaeus, a blind man, sitting by the highway begging. When he heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, he began to cry out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.” In these words, Bartimaeus was saying that he believed in Jesus as the Messiah. Many told him to be quiet, but he continued to cry out loudly, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.”

Jesus commanded that Bartimaeus should be brought to Him. They said to him, “Come, He is asking for you.” Immediately, he got up and went to Jesus. Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man replied, “Lord, I want to be able to see.” Jesus said, “Go, your faith has made you to see.” Immediately, Bartimaeus received his sight, and he followed Jesus in thankfulness and joy.

- Zacchaeus, a tax collector, climbed a fig tree so he could see Jesus. Jesus told him to come down, because He wanted to stay with him that day.
- Zacchaeus showed his faith by promising to help the poor and repay all whom he had cheated.
- Jesus was pleased and said He had come to seek and save those who are lost.
- Blind Bartimaeus recognized Jesus as the Messiah by calling out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.” Jesus restored his sight, and he followed Jesus.

JESUS, THE GOOD SHEPHERD

John 10



The Old Testament spoke about a coming Shepherd who would be the Messiah. Jesus claimed to be that Promised Shepherd. He said, "I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd. He calls His sheep by name and leads them. His sheep follow Him because they know His voice. They will never follow a stranger; because they do not know His voice."

Those listening to Jesus did not understand that Jesus was speaking of the Shepherd - Messiah, so He said again, "I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. Whoever enters through me will be saved. The thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy. I have come that they may have life. I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. The hired hand does not own the sheep, so when he sees the wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and runs away because he cares nothing for the sheep. I am the Good Shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me. Just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father. I lay down my life for the sheep. I lay down my life, only to take it up again. No one takes it from me. I lay it down and I take it up."

When the Feast of Dedication was held at Jerusalem, Jesus was in the temple area. The Jews gathered around him, saying, "If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me. You do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them everlasting life, and they shall never perish. No one can take them out of my hand. No one can take them out of my Father's hand. The Father and I are one."

The Jews became angry and picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?" "We are stoning you for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God." "Why do you accuse me of blasphemy, because I said, 'I am God's Son'? Believe the miracles that you see, and understand that the Father is in me, and I am in the Father." Again they tried to seize him, but He walked away unharmed.

- Jesus said He was the Good Shepherd, the Messiah, promised in the Old Testament. Like sheep, believers know His voice and will only follow Him.
- The Good Shepherd came to lay down His life to give His sheep everlasting life.
- The Jews accused Jesus of blasphemy for saying that He was the Son of God.
- When they tried to stone him, He walked away unharmed.

MARY, MARTHA, AND LAZARUS

Luke 10 John 11



One day Jesus and His disciples came to the village of Bethany where Martha opened her home to them. It seems that Martha owned the home and her sister Mary and brother, Lazarus lived with her. On this occasion, Martha was working hard to prepare a meal for Jesus and His disciples. She saw that her sister Mary was just sitting at the feet of Jesus listening to everything He was saying. Martha came to Jesus complaining, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help

me!"

Jesus said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is best, and it will not be taken away from her."

Not long after this, Lazarus became very sick. The sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." When He heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. It is for the glory of God, so that God's Son may be glorified through it." He stayed where He was two more days. Then He said to His disciples, "Let us go back to Bethany. Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." His disciples answered, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. Let us go to him. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe." Thomas said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him."

When Jesus arrived at Bethany, Lazarus had already been dead four days. Many of the Jews from Jerusalem had come to comfort Mary and Martha. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet Him. She said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection, and the life. He that believes in me, though he were dead, yet he shall live: And whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

After she had said this, she went back and told Mary. "The Teacher is here and is asking for you." When Mary came to Jesus, she fell at His feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her and the others with her crying, He was deeply moved and cried, also. The Jews said, "See how He loved him!" "Where have you laid him?" Jesus asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. Some of

them said, "He opened the eyes of the blind man, could He have kept this man from dying?"

The grave was a cave with a stone laid against the entrance. "Take away the stone," He said. "But, Lord," said Martha, "by this time there is a bad smell, for he has been dead four days." Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I know that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

Many of the Jews who had come and had seen what Jesus did, believed in Him. Some of the others went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. "What are we going to do?" they asked. "For this man is performing many miraculous signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation."

One of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! It is better that one man die for the people than for the whole nation to perish." In saying this, he prophesied that Jesus should die for the Jewish nation, and also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one. From that day on they plotted to take His life.

- Martha tried to show her love for Jesus by serving him; Mary showed her love by listening to Him. Jesus said that Mary had chosen what is most important, to listen to His words.
- Jesus did not come when Lazarus was very sick. He came when Lazarus had been dead four days, so that God would be glorified in the raising of Lazarus.
- Martha showed her great faith confessing Jesus to be the Messiah.
- In the meeting of the Sanhedrin, Caiaphas, the high priest, said that one man should die for the nation, meaning Jesus. They looked for some way to capture and kill Jesus.

THE ANOINTING OF JESUS FOR HIS BURIAL

Matthew 26 Mark 14 John 12



Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus had been raised from the dead. Many came to see Lazarus. A dinner was given in Jesus' honor at the home of Simon, who had been a leper. Martha served the dinner. Lazarus was there reclining at the table with Jesus. Mary took a jar of expensive perfume, poured it on Jesus' head and feet, and wiped His feet with her hair. The house was filled with the smell of the perfume.

When the disciples saw this, they were upset. Judas said, "Why this waste? Why wasn't this perfume sold, and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." Judas did not really care about the poor. He said it because he was a thief. As keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

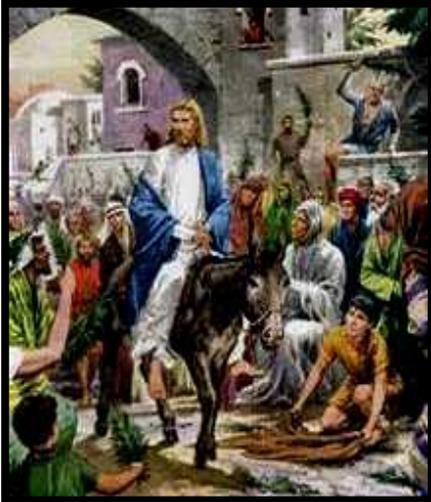
"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "You will always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for my burial. Wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will be told in memory of her." Mary understood Jesus' teachings that He was going to die as the Messiah or Savior.

This made one of the disciples, Judas Iscariot, angry. Jesus had publicly rebuked him. He left and went to the chief priests and asked them, "What are you willing to give me if I hand Jesus over to you?" The chief priests counted out thirty silver coins and gave them to Judas. This was the price of a dead slave. In this way, they told Judas that Jesus would die. From then on, Judas watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to the chief priests.

- When Simon had a dinner given in Jesus' honor, Mary poured expensive perfume on Jesus' head and feet. Jesus said that she had done this to prepare Him for His burial.
- Judas said that this was a great waste and was rebuked by Jesus.
- In anger, Judas went to the chief priests and received thirty silver coins, the price of a dead slave, to betray Jesus.
- We should all be careful with anger. Anger blots out the will of God and promotes the will of Satan. It destroys a person's sense of right and wrong.

PALM SUNDAY

Matthew 21 Mark 11 Luke 19



This was a very special day as the shepherds were bringing their lambs to the temple to be used as sacrifices for the Passover. The lambs had to be set aside four days before the Passover. The day we call Palm Sunday would therefore have been the last day that the lambs for the Passover could be brought for inspection and approval. Palm Sunday then, was that last day, the day the Father brought His Lamb for the Passover.

A great number of people from all over the world had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover Feast. They heard that Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem. As Jesus came to the Mount of Olives, He told two of His disciples. "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a donkey and a colt on which no one has ever ridden. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying them?' Tell him, 'The Lord needs them.'"

The disciples went to the village and found it just as they had been told. As they were untying the donkey, the owners asked them, "Why are you untying the donkey?" They replied, "The Lord needs them." They brought them to Jesus, threw their cloaks on them and put Jesus on the donkeys.

As Jesus went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. When He came near the road that goes down from the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd began to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen. "Blessed is the King coming in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" Some of the Pharisees said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" Jesus said, "If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

When He came into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, "Who is this?" The crowd answered, "This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee."

As Jesus came down the road which led from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem, He paused and looked over the temple and Jerusalem and cried saying, "If you had only known on this day what would bring you peace--but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and surround you. They will lay you even to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you." Jesus here pointed to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D.

Then He entered the temple and for the second time drove out those who were selling sacrificial doves and animals, and changing money into temple currency. All sacrifices had to be bought at the temple with temple money. The prices of the sacrifices and temple money were very high. It was a racket. Jesus said, "It is written, 'My house is the house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves.'"

- When Jesus came into Jerusalem riding a donkey, the prophecy that the Messiah King was coming, written over four hundred years earlier by Zechariah the prophet, was fulfilled.
- The people proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah, saying "Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."
- Jesus wept over Jerusalem and prophesied its destruction by the Romans. This took place in 70 A.D.
- Jesus cleansed the temple a second time and said "My house is the house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves." Jesus began His ministry by cleansing the temple and ended His ministry by cleansing it again.

JESUS TEACHES AT THE TEMPLE

Matthew 21 Mark 12 Luke 20



During the days before the Passover, Jesus taught in the temple every day. He tried to get the leaders to listen and believe with a number of parables. In one of the parables Jesus said to the chief priests and elders, "There was a man who had two sons. He told the first son, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.' 'I will not,' he answered, but later he went to work in the vineyard. The father told the other son the same thing. His son answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go to the vineyard."

"Which of the two did what his father wanted?" "The first," they answered. Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. Even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him."

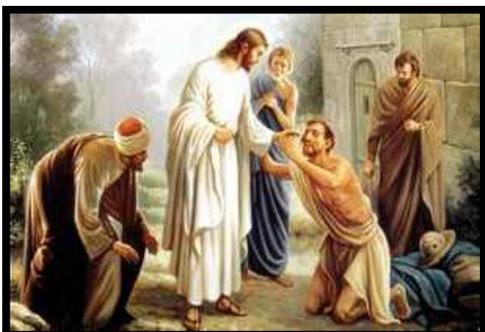
"Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and, built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. When the harvest time came, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his rent. The tenants took his servants, beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. The landowner sent other servants, and the tenants treated them the same way. Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said. When the tenants saw the son, they said, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' So they killed him. Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" They said, "He will destroy the wicked tenants and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time."

Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The Stone the builders rejected has become the Cornerstone. The Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes?' Therefore, I tell you, that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this Stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed." When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew He was talking about them. They looked for a way to arrest Him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people felt He was a prophet.

- The parables showed that the leaders of the Jews were rejecting Jesus. They were compared to the wicked tenants who killed God's servants and finally His Son.
- The Stone which the Jews rejected is Jesus, the Savior. The Gentiles would become God's people as Noah had foretold in prophecy.

THE SON OF MAN MUST BE LIFTED UP

John 12



Some Greeks (Gentiles), who came to worship at the Feast of the Passover, witnessed the reception of Jesus into Jerusalem. They went to Philip with a request. "Sir, we would like to see Jesus." Philip went to tell Andrew. Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus. As Simeon in the temple had foretold, Jesus was to become the Light of the Gentiles. Jesus said, "The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds" (This was a picture of Jesus as the Seed of Life about to die or be planted that many other seeds might come to everlasting life through Him.)

Jesus continued, saying, "What shall I say? `Father, save me from this hour?' No, it was for this reason that I came. Father, glorify your name!" A voice came from heaven, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." Those that heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to Him. Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit."

"Now is the time for judgment on this world. Now the prince of this world will be driven out. When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to myself." Jesus spoke about being lifted up to show the kind of death He was going to die. The people did not understand and asked, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ will remain forever. How can you say, `The Son of man must be lifted up'? Who is this `Son of man'? Then Jesus told them, "You are going to have the Light just a little longer. Walk while you have the Light before darkness comes. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. Put your trust in the Light, so that you may be children of light."

When He had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them. Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still did not believe in Him. This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet: "Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Isaiah spoke clearly about the promised Servant who would justify many but that His own people would not believe in Him. Despite all of the opposition, some of the leaders believed in him, but because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue. The Pharisees loved praise of men more than the praise of God.

Then Jesus told them, "I have come into the world as the Light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness."

- Jesus spoke of His crucifixion by saying that He would be lifted up.
- The Father answered Jesus saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again."
- Jesus said that He is the Light of the world. Walk in His Light, not in darkness.

TRAPS OF THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES

Matthew 22 Mark 12 Luke 20



The Pharisees wanted to trap Jesus in His words as He taught in the temple, so they sent their disciples to Him. "Teacher," they said, "we know you are a man of truth and that you teach the way of God. Tell us, is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" Jesus knew their evil plan and said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? Show me the coin used for paying the tax." They brought Him a denarius. He asked them, "Whose picture and inscription is this?" "Caesar's," they replied. He said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, give to God what is God's." When they heard this, they were amazed and went away.

Next the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection or life after death, tried to debate with Jesus to show that the teaching of the resurrection or life after death was foolish. "Teacher, Moses wrote that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and have children for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman and died childless. The second married her and died childless. In the same way the seven died, leaving no children. Now at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?"

Jesus replied, "You are mistaken because you do not know Scripture or the power of God. The people of this life marry and are given in marriage. In the resurrection from the dead, they will neither marry nor are given in marriage. They can no longer die, for they are like the angels. They are God's children. But as far as whether there is life after death, God showed this when He said from the burning bush to Moses, 'I am the the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.' He is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

Learning that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, one of the teachers of the Law asked, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" Jesus answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, with all your mind. The second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments. There is no commandment greater than these."

From then on, no one dared ask Him any more questions.

- The Pharisees tried to trap Jesus concerning paying taxes to Caesar. Jesus said, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and give to God what is God's."
- The Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection tried to trap Jesus concerning marriage in heaven. Jesus told them there is no marriage in heaven and that God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living.
- When asked the greatest commandment, Jesus replied, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. The second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

FIVE WISE AND FIVE FOOLISH VIRGINS

Matthew 24,25 Luke 21



Can a person figure out when Judgment day will come? Jesus said, "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. So you must be ready, because the Son of man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him."

Jesus used the picture of a wedding procession to show the difference

between the wise and the foolish people on earth who need to watch and be ready to receive Jesus.

"The kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any extra oil. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all fell asleep.

At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' 'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both of us. You must go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.' But while they were gone to buy the oil, the bridegroom came. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet, and the door was shut. Later the others who went to buy oil came. They said, 'Sir, Sir, open the door for us!' But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.' Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour."

To help prepare for that final day, Jesus gave this information. "Before Judgment Day there will be wars and rumors of war. Christians will be persecuted and hated because of me. Many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other. False prophets will come and deceive many people. Because of great wickedness, the love of many will grow cold. But all who stand firm in their faith will be saved. This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world and then the end will come."

- Jesus said that only His Father knows when the end of the world will come.
- The wise and foolish virgins teach us that we must always be prepared to meet Jesus on Judgment Day. God's Word is the oil for our lamps of faith.
- All the signs pointing to the end of the world have been fulfilled.

JUDGMENT DAY

Matthew 25



In another parable Jesus showed the division that will take place in space between the believers and the unbelievers on Judgment Day.

"When the Son of man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with him, He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and He will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on

His left. The King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'"

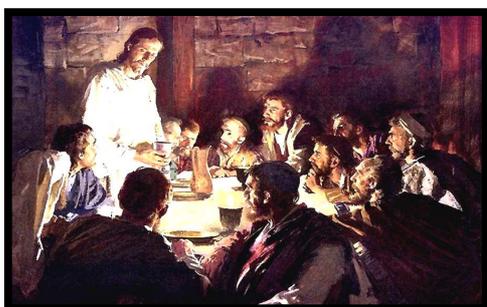
To the ones who are placed on His right He will speak the following words of praise and love. "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you came to visit me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or give you clothes? When did we see you sick or in prison, and we visited you?" The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." Only what is done out of love for Christ in faith is acceptable to God.

To those on His left, Jesus will speak the following words. "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink. I was a stranger and you did not invite me in. I needed clothes and you did not clothe me. I was sick and in prison and you did not visit me." They also will answer, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?" He will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these my brothers, you did not do for me" Whatever is not done in faith out of love for Christ is not acceptable to God.

- On Judgment Day, all people will be divided, the believers (sheep) on the right and the unbelievers (goats) on the left. Believers will inherit everlasting life. Unbelievers will go to hell.
- Whatever we do for one another must be done through faith in Christ and out of love for Him.

JESUS CELEBRATES THE PASSOVER WITH HIS DISCIPLES

Matthew 26 Mark 14 Luke 22 John 13



It was time for the Passover. Peter and John asked Jesus, "Where do you want us to prepare the supper?" Jesus replied, "As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house he enters, and say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' He will show you a large upper room already furnished. Make preparations there." They left and found things just as Jesus had told them.

When the time of the Passover came, and they were eating and reclining at the table, Jesus said to His Disciples, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."

The disciples had been quarreling about who would be the greatest among them and needed to be taught a lesson. Jesus got up, took off His outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around His waist. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples' feet, drying them with the towel. He came to Peter, but Peter said, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet? No, you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." Peter replied, "Then, Lord, not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet. You are clean, though not all of you are clean." He knew who was going to betray Him, and that was why He said not all of them were clean.

When He had finished washing their feet, He put on His outer clothing and sat down. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" He asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. No servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him."

Jesus, being troubled in spirit, said, "I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me." His disciples looked at one another wondering who it was. Simon Peter motioned to John and said, "Ask Him which one He means." Leaning back against Jesus, John asked Him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot. "What you are about to do, do quickly," Jesus told him. As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out into the night.

- Jesus told Peter and John where to prepare the Passover meal.
- To teach His disciples a lesson in love and humility, He washed their feet.
- Judas, the betrayer, left after receiving the dipped piece of bread.
- This fulfilled Scripture which said, "He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me. Psalm 41:8"

INSTITUTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Matthew 26 Mark 14 Luke 22 John 13



As they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body which is given for you.

In the same manner also, He took the cup when He had supped and given thanks, saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, which

is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Jesus said to His disciples, "Yet a little while I am with you. Where I go you cannot come. A new command I give you, Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later." Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." Jesus answered, "Will you really lay down your life for me? You will all fall away, for it is written: 'I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."

Peter declared, "Even if all fall away, I will not." "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "Tonight, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." Peter insisted, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never deny you." All the others said the same. Jesus spoke again to Peter and said, 'Simon, Simon, Satan has obtained permission to sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail. When you have turned back again in faith, strengthen your brothers.'

- Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper.
- Peter boasted that he would lay down his life for Jesus, as did all the disciples.
- Jesus told Peter that he would deny Him and all would leave him, fulfilling Scripture, "smite the shepherd, the sheep will be scattered." Zechariah 13:7
- The person that thinks he is strong must be careful or he will fall.

JESUS POINTS HIS DISCIPLES TO HEAVEN

John 14



Jesus continued to instruct His disciples saying "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself that where I am, there you may be, also. Where I go, you know and the way you know." Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, and how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father." Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father." Jesus answered: "Have I been with you so long and yet you have not known me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father. Don't you believe that I am

in the Father, and the Father in me? The words I speak to you, I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me, or else believe me for the miracles themselves."

"If you love me, you will obey what I command. I will ask the Father, and He will give you the Counselor to be with you forever- the Spirit of Truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you will live, also. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father."

"If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. I am going away and I am 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. I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me, but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me."

- Jesus told His disciples He was going to His Heavenly Father to prepare a place for them and He would come back to take them to heaven. He will never leave us alone and is preparing a place for us when we die.
- He will send the Holy Spirit to strengthen and guide them and us.

THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

Matthew 26 Mark 14 Luke 22 John 18



Jesus closed the Passover meal and evening with the loving and beautiful High Priestly Prayer (John 17) to the Father for His disciples, the Church, and its members till the end of time.

He then left with His disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley to the Garden of Gethsemane at the base of the Mount of Olives. He told His disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." Taking Peter, James, and John with Him, He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful. Stay here and keep watch with me." Going a little farther, He fell with His face to the ground and prayed, "Father, all things are possible with you, if it is possible, take away this cup from me. Nevertheless not

what I will, but what you will."

Rising from prayer, He went to the disciples and found them asleep. He said to Peter, "Could you not watch with me for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak." He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done." When He came back, He again found them sleeping. So He left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing. Being in anguish, an angel from heaven appeared and strengthened him and He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

When He returned to the disciples, He said to them, "Sleep on now." A little later He said, "The hour is here, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go! He is here who betrays me!" The light of torches could be seen coming down the steep hill from the temple.

Judas knew the place where Jesus often met with His disciples. So Judas came to the garden, guiding the soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns, and weapons. Jesus asked them, "Who is it you want?" "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied boldly. "I am he," Jesus said. When Jesus said, "I am he," they all were knocked backwards and fell to the ground. Again He asked them, "Who is it you want?" They said in a much softer voice, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said, "I told you that I am He. If you are looking for me, then let these men go."

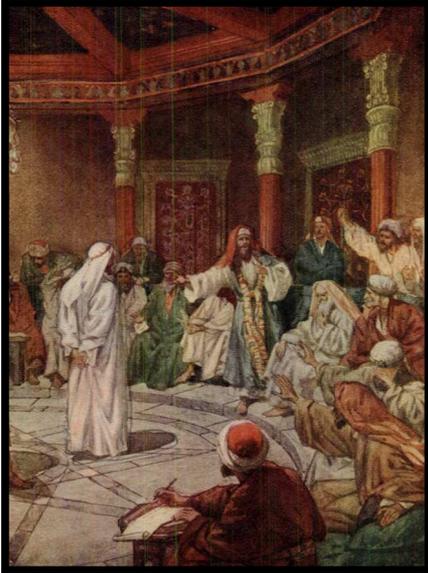
Jesus' followers said, "Lord, should we strike with our swords?" Simon Peter drew his sword, struck Malchus, the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Don't you know that I can call on my Father, and He will give me more than twelve legions of angels?" He touched the man's ear and healed it.

Judas had arranged a sign. "The one I kiss is the man." Going to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed Him. Jesus said, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of man with a kiss?" The men seized Jesus and arrested Him. Then Jesus said, "Am I leading a rebellion that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me." Then all His disciples ran away in fear.

- Jesus prayed earnestly in the Garden of Gethsemane, while His disciples slept. Jesus accepted the Will of His Father that He should die for the sins of all people.
- Jesus showed His divine power by knocking down the men who came to arrest Him. He protected His disciples by commanding those sent to arrest him, "I am the one you want, let my disciples go."
- Peter wanted to defend Jesus and cut off Malchus' ear.
- Jesus told Peter to put away his sword, that His Father could send thousands of angels, and He healed Malchus' ear.
- Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss.
- The disciples fled in fear.

JESUS BEFORE THE HIGH PRIEST

Matthew 26 Mark 14 Luke 22 John 18



After they had arrested Jesus, they brought Him first to Annas, father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest. This gave time for the Sanhedrin to gather. It was very late, probably around midnight. Annas was so deceitful that the Romans had deposed him as high priest. He had enough power to have Caiaphas, his son-in-law, appointed as high priest. Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it would be better for one man to die for the people, than the whole nation perish.

After the Sanhedrin had gathered, they held an illegal trial. Night trials were forbidden in the Law. When the trial began, Caiaphas questioned Jesus about His disciples and His teaching. "I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in synagogues or at the temple. I said nothing in secret.

Why question me? Ask those who heard me." When Jesus said this, one of the officials struck Him in the face. "Is this the way you answer the high priest?" he demanded. "If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "tell me. But if I spoke the truth, why did you hit me?"

Peter and John had followed Jesus. Because John knew the high priest, he was let into the courtyard, but Peter waited outside at the door. John came back, spoke to the girl on duty there, and brought Peter in. It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire to keep warm.

One of the servant girls of the high priest saw Peter warming himself. Looking closely at him she said, "You were with that man." Peter denied it saying, "I don't know what you're talking about," and went out into the entryway. The rooster crowed the first time. When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, "This fellow is one of them." Also, a relative of Malchus said that he thought he had seen Peter in the garden. Peter could not help talking. People from Galilee had a very well known accent. Those around the fire standing near Peter said, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean. Your accent gives you away." Peter began to curse and swear, saying, "I don't know this man you're talking about." Immediately, the rooster crowed the second time. The Lord turned and looked directly at Peter. Then Peter remembered the words the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." Peter hurried outside and cried bitterly.

The chief priests, elders, and teachers of the Law came together to try and find evidence against Jesus so that they could put Him to death. The Sanhedrin used false witnesses against Jesus. Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree.

Then the high priest asked Jesus, "Aren't you going to answer? What are these charges that these men are bringing against you?" But Jesus remained silent. So the high priest put Jesus under a special oath in which he had to answer. "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One? I adjure you by the living God that you tell us." "I am," said Jesus. "You will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One, coming on the clouds of heaven." The high priest tore his clothes, which was forbidden for the high priest to do. He said. "Why do we need any more witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" They all said he should die. Since this was done in a night trial, it was not a legal trial or verdict. Jesus was then turned over to the servants who cruelly mistreated Him the rest of the night.

- Jesus was taken to Annas, to give time for the Sanhedrin to gather, then to the palace of Caiaphas for questioning. Night trials and the use of false witnesses were both forbidden in God's Law.
- John took Peter to the courtyard where Peter denied Jesus three times.
- When Jesus was put under a special oath in God's name, He had to answer. Jesus said that He was the Christ, the Son of God.
- Accused of blasphemy, they said Jesus should die.

JESUS BEFORE PILATE

Matthew 27 Mark 15 Luke 23 John 18



At daybreak, to legalize the night trial, Jesus was led before the Sanhedrin made up of the chief priests and teachers of the law. They again said, "If you are the Christ, tell us." Jesus answered, "If I tell you, you will not believe me. But from now on, the Son of man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God." They asked, "Are you then the Son of God?" He replied, "You are right in saying I am." They said, "Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips." They bound Him and took Him to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. It was early morning, and Pilate came out of the Judgment Hall to them. He asked, "What charges are you bringing against this man?" They replied, "If he were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you." Pilate said, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." "We are not allowed to execute anyone," the Jews replied. As Jesus stood before the governor, they began to accuse him, saying, "We have found this man causing trouble in our nation. He opposes paying taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, a king." But Jesus did not speak.

Pilate asked him, "Don't you hear what they are saying against you?" Still Jesus made no reply. Pilate asked Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?" "Is that your own idea, or did others tell you?" Jesus asked. "Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight, but my kingdom is not from here." "You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. For this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." "What is truth?" Pilate asked.

Pilate went out again to the Jews and said, "I find no basis for a charge against Him. But they insisted, "He stirs up the people all over Judea beginning in Galilee." When Pilate learned He was a Galilean, he sent Him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time. Herod was greatly pleased to see Jesus, and hoped to see Him perform some miracle. Herod asked Him many questions, but Jesus would not answer him. The chief priests and the teachers of the law meanwhile stood around accusing Him. Then Jesus was dressed in an elegant robe, mocked, and sent back to Pilate. That day Herod and Pilate became friends. Before this, they had been enemies.

Pilate called together the chief priests and the rulers and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was stirring up the people to rebellion. I have examined Him and have found no basis for your charges against Him. Neither has Herod, for he sent Him back to me. He has done nothing to deserve death. I will punish Him and then release Him."

- Jesus was questioned by Pilate and Herod who found no fault in Him.
- Pilate told the leaders of the Jews that he wanted to release Jesus.

JESUS IS CONDEMNED

Matthew 27 Mark 15 Luke 23 John 19



At the time of the Passover, it was the custom for Pilate to release someone from prison. There was a prisoner called Barabbas, who had been put in prison for rebellion in the city and for murder. So Pilate asked them, "Who do you want me to release to you, Barabbas or Jesus, who is called Christ?" With one voice they cried out, "Away with this man! Release Barabbas!" Still wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again, but they kept shouting, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" For the third time he spoke to them: "Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in Him no grounds for death. Therefore I will have Him punished and then release Him." Pilate thought that if Jesus was made to be an object of pity, they would release Him. So Pilate took Jesus and had Him scourged.

After the scourging, once more Pilate came out and said, "I am bringing Him out to you. I find no basis for a charge against Him. Behold the man!" Jesus was a pitiful sight. Instead of feeling sorry for him, the chief priests and their officials shouted, "Crucify Him!" Pilate answered, "You take Him and crucify Him." The Jews insisted, "According to our law He must die because He claimed to be the Son of God." When Pilate heard this, he was afraid. He took Jesus back into the judgment hall and asked Jesus, "Where do you come from?" But Jesus gave no answer. "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you know I have power to free you or to crucify you?" Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above."

After this, Pilate again tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews began shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar." Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar. When Pilate heard this, he said, "Here is your king," They shouted, "Take Him away! Crucify him!" "Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked. "We have no king but Caesar," they said. Pilate at that time received a message from his wife. "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal in a dream because of Him."

When Judas saw that Jesus was going to be condemned, a feeling of regret and guilt came over him. He tried to return the thirty silver coins to the chief priests, saying, "I have sinned, for I have betrayed innocent blood." "What is that to us?" they replied. Judas in despair threw the money into the temple, went away, and hanged himself. The chief priests picked up the money and said, "It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money." With it they bought the potter's field as a burial place for foreigners and called it the Field of Blood. What Zechariah, the prophet, prophesied was fulfilled: "They took the thirty silver coins and bought the potter's field."

- The people asked for Barabbas to be released instead of Jesus.
- Judas returned the money and hung himself knowing that Jesus was innocent.
- The prophecy of Zechariah was fulfilled. Zechariah 11:12,13

THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS - GOOD FRIDAY

Matthew 27 Mark 15 Luke 23 John 19



When Pilate saw that an uproar was starting, he washed his hands saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood." All the people answered, "Let his blood be on us and on our children!" He released Barabbas and had Jesus prepared for crucifixion by more scourging. Scourging before crucifixion was common, as a person would die more quickly. The soldiers put a purple robe on him, twisted together a crown of thorns, and set it on His head. Mockingly they said, "Hail, king of the Jews!" They hit Him in the face, struck Him on the head with a mock staff, spat on him, bowed to him, and worshiped Him. When they had finished mocking Him, they took off the purple robe, put His own clothes on him, and led Him out to be crucified at the hill of the Skull, called Golgotha. Because of the loss of blood and beatings, Jesus was too weak to carry the cross such a distance. The Roman soldiers forced a man passing by from the crowd, Simon from Cyrene, to carry the cross. Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus. Scripture says that he and his sons became Christians.

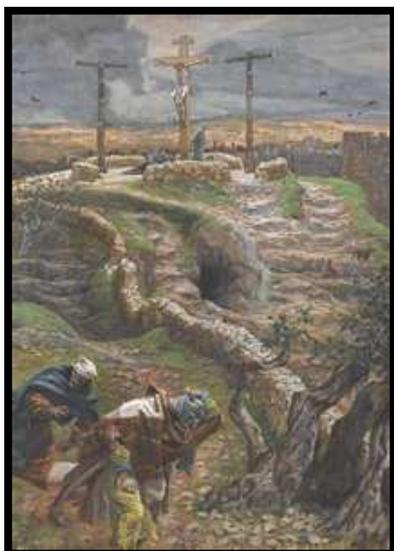
A large number of people followed Jesus, including women who mourned and cried. Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For such terrible days are coming upon you that you will say, 'Blessed are the women who have no children.' People will say to the mountains, fall on us and to the hills cover us, hide us. For if they do these things when God's favor and the redemption in the Messiah has made your nation alive, what will happen when the time of God's redemption in the Messiah is rejected and has left the nation dead?" (The green tree and the dry tree)

At Golgotha, the soldiers offered Jesus wine mixed with myrrh to ease the pain, but He refused it. It was the third hour, 9 o'clock, when they crucified Him. The soldiers took His clothes, dividing them into four parts. The undergarment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. "Let's not tear it," they said. "Let's decide by lot who will get it." This happened that the Scripture might be fulfilled which said, "They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing." Pilate had a sign fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. The sign was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. Many of the Jews read this sign, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city. The chief priests said to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man claimed He was the king of the Jews." Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

- Pilate washed his hands claiming to be innocent of Jesus' death. The Jews said, "His blood be on us."
- Too weak to carry His cross to Golgotha, Simon of Cyrene, a Gentile, was made to carry it behind Him.
- The sign on the cross said, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."
- Scripture was fulfilled by the soldiers casting lots for His clothing.

JESUS' WORDS FROM THE CROSS AND HIS DEATH

Matthew 27 Mark 15 Luke 23 John 19



As Jesus was hanging on the cross, the people stood watching while the rulers mocked. They said, "He saved others; let Him save himself if He is the Christ, the Chosen One." The soldiers, also, mocked Him, saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself." Those who passed by hurled insults at Him, shaking their heads and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross!" In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the Law, and the elders mocked Him. "He saved others, but He can't save himself. If he's the King of Israel, let Him come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. He trusts in God; let God rescue Him, for He said, `I am the Son of God.'" Jesus said, "**Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.**"

They, also, crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left, that Scripture might be fulfilled, "He was numbered with the transgressors." At first both of the robbers heaped insults on Him. Later one of the criminals remembered what he had learned of the Messiah when he was a boy in the village school. Seeing and listening, he came to believe that Jesus had to be the Messiah. He saw Jesus sacrificing himself for sinners. He said to his companion, "Don't you even fear God, seeing you are under the same sentence? We are being punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered, "**I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in Paradise.**"

Near the cross of Jesus stood His mother, His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw His mother there and His disciple John standing nearby, He said to His mother, "**Behold your son,**" and to John, "**Behold your mother.**" From that time on, John took Mary to his home and treated her as his mother.

From the sixth hour, twelve o'clock, until the ninth hour, three o'clock, eerie darkness came over all the land for the sun stopped shining. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "**Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?**"-- which means, "**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**" The Father had withdrawn from His Son and was causing Him to suffer the everlasting torments of hell for human sin. When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah. The rest said, "Leave Him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save Him."

Knowing that all things were accomplished, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "**I thirst.**" A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. When He had received the drink, Jesus said, "**It is finished.**" His work

of atonement for the sin of mankind was completed. With that, He bowed His head and cried out again in a loud voice, "**Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit.**" When He had said this, He breathed His last.

Jesus and His Father were again united. His suffering and death had been accepted as payment for all the sins committed in all the history of the world, past, present, and future.

- Jesus spoke seven times from the cross.
- God's Promise given to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden was now fulfilled. Satan was crushed and salvation for man was completed.
- Since Jesus being True God, He became True Man that He might fulfill God's Law, suffer, and die for mankind. God can not live under Law or suffer or die. If Jesus had only been a man, all He did, He would have done only for Himself.
- Since Jesus was True God, when He as True Man fulfilled the Law, suffered and died, because He was True God, it was sufficient payment to abolish the curse of death for sin for the whole world and offer to all men everlasting life through faith in Jesus, the Savior of the world.

Continued, additional information on Good Friday and the Covenant Fulfilled

God the Father's response to the death of His Son, Jesus, was awesome and majestic. At the sixth hour, or twelve o'clock, Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me." Till the ninth hour there was a darkness like the eclipse of the sun in which the entire country was enveloped in an eerie darkness. This was the climax of the suffering on the cross. God the Father withdrew from Jesus His Son and poured out on Him an eternity of judgment for the sins of mankind, past, present, and future in these three hours. This incredible time of suffering was completed at three o'clock, at the time of the evening sacrifice at the temple. You can hear the relief and triumph in Jesus' last words, "I thirst. It is finished. Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." He and the Father were united again. God had kept His promise. His Covenant begun in Eden was now fulfilled.

Like a massive drum roll, the earth shook, the rocks split, the curtain separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies in the temple was ripped from top to bottom. It was enormous, sixty feet long, thirty feet wide and three to four inches thick, made up of seventy-two squares. It took three hundred men to handle the curtain. The graves of some believers, also, split open and they walked in triumph through Jerusalem on Easter morning.

This Good Friday was the day of the fulfillment of **God's Covenant or Promise** of Salvation for mankind given to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. "I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her **Seed**. It shall crush your head and you shall crush His heel." Genesis 3:15

This was recalled and revealed more fully in God's opening and encouraging words to assembled Israel on Mt. Sinai through Moses. "If you will obey my word and keep my **Covenant**, you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me, above all people, for all the earth is mine. You shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation." Exodus 19:4-6

Moses further revealed this saying, "For you are a holy people unto the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a special people unto himself, above all people who are on the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love upon you nor choose you because you were more in number than any people, for you were the fewest of all people. But because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers, the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord, your God, He is God, the faithful God which keeps His **Covenant** and mercy with those who love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations." Deuteronomy 7:6-9

In the eerie darkness, the shaking earth and splitting rocks, the ripping and destruction of the temple curtain, God disclosed the end of the Old Testament sacrificial system, (the Ceremonial Law) which caused His people to approach Him in penitence and faith in the coming Messiah seeking His mercy through required sacrifices of God through an earthly high priest. Now Jesus, God's Son, the Divine High Priest and Redeemer, had come and

offered himself as the one sacrifice to set all people free to come to God through His Son alone, not through a sacrificial system and an earthly high priest. In the New Testament Era, there is no longer a massive curtain between God and His people. It has been ripped apart and through faith all who believe in Jesus as the Son of God and Savior have direct access to God's throne of grace, mercy, and forgiveness.

This was the fulfillment of **God's Covenant** spoken to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, to Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, to Israel through Moses, and to God's people through the prophets throughout the Old Testament. Its pointing to the coming of Christ as the Messiah of the world meant that God's Covenant was not only for one Old Testament race or nation which could or would be His chosen people, a holy nation. Peter in the New Testament announces to all believers in the New Testament Era that because of Jesus' atonement all believers **are** to God what He had promised over a period of four thousand years in the Old Testament that they would become through the coming of the Messiah or Savior.

Peter, writing in the New Testament, says to us and to all who will become believers in Christ, "You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God which had not obtained mercy, but have now obtained mercy" 1 Peter 2:9, 10

What a day that Friday was! What a time we Christians live in!

JESUS' DEATH AND BURIAL

Matthew 27 Mark 15 Luke 23 John 19



When Jesus gave up His life, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, the earth shook, the rocks split, and some tombs broke open. The centurion and soldiers were terrified and said, "Surely He was the Son of God!" Frightened, the people went away. Many women and those who had followed Him stood at a distance and watched.

Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have their legs broken to stop their breathing and then to take their bodies down from the cross. The soldiers broke the legs of the men who had been crucified with Jesus, but when they came to Jesus and found that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. All of this happened so that the Scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of His bones will be broken," and, "They will look on the one they have pierced."

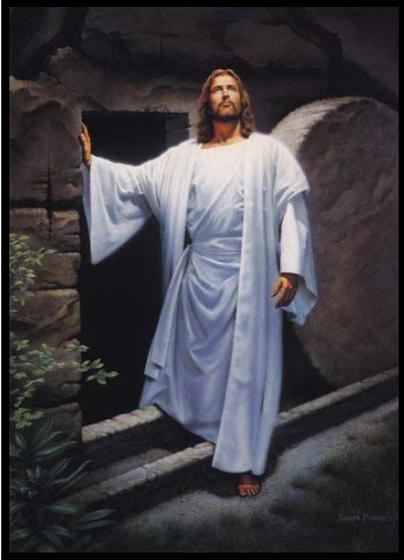
Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin, went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate ordered that it be given to him. Joseph had been a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews. He took the body away, accompanied by Nicodemus, also, of the Sanhedrin, who had once come to Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes weighing about seventy-five pounds. They wrapped Jesus' body with the spices in strips of linen, according to the Jewish burial custom. Joseph placed Jesus in his own new tomb, cut out of rock in a garden near the place where Jesus was crucified. They rolled a large stone in front of the tomb and went away. The women saw where Jesus had been buried. They went home and prepared spices and perfumes to complete the anointing of Jesus' body. They rested on Saturday, the Sabbath.

Meanwhile, the chief priests and Pharisees went to Pilate, and said, "Sir, we remember that while He was still alive, that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day, otherwise His disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that He has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first." Pilate told them to go and make the tomb as secure as they could. So they put the seal of the Roman Empire on the stone and posted a Roman guard. Now it would be a federal offense to open the tomb.

- When Jesus died there was an earthquake, the rocks and tombs split open, the Temple curtain was torn in two.
- Jesus' legs were not broken, but His side was pierced.
- Joseph was given the body of Jesus and he buried Jesus in his own tomb.
- Pilate ordered the tomb to be sealed with Roman soldiers guarding it.

THE RESURRECTION – EASTER

Matthew 28 Mark 16 Luke 24 John 20



Early Easter morning, Jesus rose from the grave in power and glory. He passed through the walls of the tomb and descended into hell to proclaim victory over Satan and his angels. Jesus' resurrection from the dead sealed the fact that the offering of himself as the Passover Lamb had been accepted by God the Father.

To show that Jesus had risen, an angel came down from heaven, rolled the entrance stone away, and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning and His clothes were as white as snow. The guards were so afraid that they trembled and fainted. When they came to, they hurried to the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. The chief priests gave the soldiers a large sum of money and told them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole Him

away while we were asleep'."

After Jesus' burial, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome had bought spices so that they might anoint Jesus' body after the Sabbath. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they went to the tomb. They asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" When they looked up, they saw that the stone had already been rolled away. When Mary Magdalene saw that the stone had been rolled away, she turned back, and came running to Peter and John and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have put Him."

The other women entered the tomb and saw an angel. They were afraid. "Don't be afraid," the angel said, "You are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. Go and tell His disciples and Peter that He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see Him, just as He told you." Trembling, the women ran from the tomb.

Having heard what Mary Magdalene had said, Peter and John started running for the tomb with Mary following. John reached the tomb first. He looked in at the strips of linen lying there, but did not go in. Peter rushed into the tomb and saw the strips of linen there and the burial cloth which had been around Jesus' head, folded up by itself. John then entered, saw, and believed. Still they did not understand that Jesus had to rise from the dead. The disciples went back to their homes, but Mary stood outside the tomb crying.

As she cried, she looked into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head, the other at the foot. They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put Him." At this she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not

realize that it was Jesus. “Woman,” He said, “why are you crying? Who are you looking for?” Thinking He was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get Him.” Jesus said to her, “Mary.” Recognizing Him, she cried out to Him, “Rabboni,” which means, My Great Master. Jesus replied, “Do not cling to me, for I am not yet ascended to my Father. Go to my brethren and tell them that I am returning to my Father, and your Father, to my God and your God.”

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news, “I have seen the Lord.”

- The women, coming to the tomb with their spices, saw an angel who said, “Don’t be afraid, He has risen.”
- Mary Magdalene ran to tell Peter and John who ran to the tomb and left puzzled.
- Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene. When she recognized Him, she said, “My Great Master.”

THE DISCIPLES ON THE WAY TO EMMAUS

Mark 16 Luke 24



On that same day that the angels appeared to the women at the tomb and Jesus spoke to Mary, two of Jesus' followers were going to a village called Emmaus. One of them was Cleopas, the other is thought to have been Luke. They were talking about everything that had happened. As they talked, Jesus came up and walked along with them, but they were kept from recognizing Him. Jesus asked them, "What are you talking about?"

Cleopas asked Him, "Are you a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened?" "What things?" Jesus asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and rulers handed Him over to be put to death, and they crucified Him. We had hoped that He was the one who was going to redeem Israel. It is the third day since all this took place. Some of our women went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find His body. They told us that they had seen angels who said He was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said."

Jesus then explained to them the Scripture and said, "How foolish you are, and how slow you are to believe all that the prophets have said! Didn't Christ have to suffer these things and then enter His glory?" Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He explained to them what was said in Scripture concerning himself. As they came to the village where they were going, Jesus acted as if He were going farther. They said, "Stay with us, for it is evening, the day is almost over." So Jesus went in to stay with them.

When He was at the table with them, He took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, they recognized Him, and He disappeared from their sight. They said, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" They got up and returned to Jerusalem where they found the other eleven disciples behind locked doors for fear of the Jews. The disciples said to them, "It is true! The Lord has risen, and has appeared to Peter." Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how they recognized Jesus when He broke the bread.

Suddenly, Jesus stood among them and said, "Peace be with you. Why are you troubled? Look at my hands and my feet. Touch me and see." Still they did not believe so He asked, "Do you have anything to eat?" They gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and He ate it in their presence.

- When Jesus walked with Cleopas and Luke on their way to Emmaus, He explained everything that had been written in Scripture about Him. They did not recognize Him until He gave thanks, broke the bread, and gave it to them.
- These two walked back to Jerusalem and joined the disciples in a locked room where Jesus appeared to all of them.

JESUS APPEARS TO HIS DISCIPLES AND THOMAS

Matthew 28 Mark 16 Luke 24 John 20, 21



When Jesus talked with His disciples on Easter evening, He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written, 'Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day. You are witnesses of these things.' Thomas was not with the other disciples, so they told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in His hands and put my hand into His side, I will not believe it."

A week later, His disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus suddenly stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then He said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Afterward, Jesus appeared again to His disciples by the Sea of Tiberias or Sea of Galilee. Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. "I'm going fishing," Peter told them. They said, "We'll go with you." They got into the boat and fished all night, but caught nothing.

Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. He called out to them, "Friends, have you caught any fish?" "No," they answered. He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. Then John said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him and jumped into the water to go to Jesus.

The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals with fish on it and some bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." Peter then returned to the boat, climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of one hundred fifty three large fish. Yet, even with so many fish the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask Him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord.

After the breakfast by the Sea of Tiberias or Galilee, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." The third time He said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He

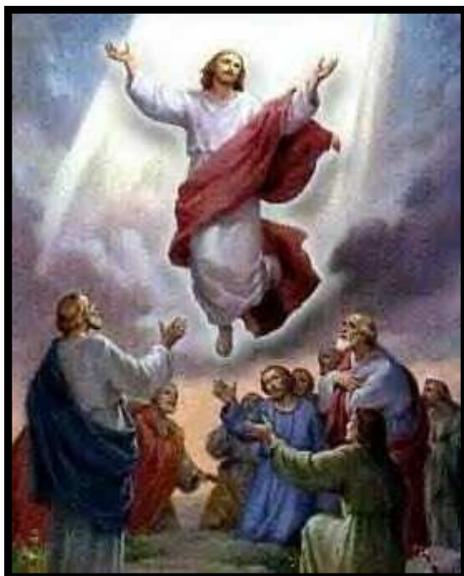
said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Peter seeing John asked Jesus, "Lord, what will this man do?" Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain till I come, what is that to you?" Jesus said to Peter, "Follow me!"

Later Jesus again appeared to all His disciples and five hundred believers in Galilee on a mountain. Jesus told His disciples that they were to stay in Jerusalem after He was gone for the coming of the Holy Spirit whom God the Father had promised. Jesus gave this command to His disciples, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned"

- Jesus said to Thomas, "See my hands and side." "Blessed are those who have not seen but yet have believed."
- The disciples caught 153 large fish when Jesus said to let down their net.
- Jesus was on the shore with fish on burning coals.
- Peter denied Jesus three times. Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved Him. Each time Jesus gave him more responsibility in the church.
- Jesus rebuked Peter for asking about John, showing that it was not his concern to know the future of John.
- The Great Commission was given to the disciples and, also, to us. Jesus promised to be with us till the end of the world
- Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; those who do not believe will be condemned.

THE ASCENSION

Mark 16 Luke 24 Acts 1



Forty days after the Resurrection, Jesus led His disciples to the Mt. of Olives near Bethany. They asked Him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you. You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

While He was blessing them, He left them and was taken up into heaven before their very eyes. A cloud hid Him from their sight, and He sat at the right hand of God. They continued looking up into the sky, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This

same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven."

Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew; James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. In great joy they returned to Jerusalem. There the disciples, Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers joined together in prayer. The believers were continually in the temple praising God. The disciples went out and preached everywhere.

After Jesus' ascension, Peter speaking to about one hundred and twenty believers, said, "The Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas, who served as the guide for those who arrested Jesus. Judas was one of us, but now that he is gone, it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us to replace Judas. They proposed two men, Joseph, also known as Justus, and Matthias. They prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two men you have chosen." They cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven disciples.

- From Mt. Olivet, Jesus ascended into heaven forty days after His resurrection. Two angels said Jesus would return the same way they had seen Him rise into the sky.
- They returned to Jerusalem to wait for the promised sending of the Holy Spirit.
- Matthias was chosen by lot to replace Judas as an apostle with the other eleven.

PENTECOST

Acts 2



At the Feast of Harvest, which we call Pentecost, the disciples were all together in one place giving thanks unto the Lord for what had happened seven weeks earlier. Suddenly, a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire on each of them. Filled with the Holy Spirit, they began to speak in other languages. There were God-fearing Jews from every

nation living in Jerusalem. When this sound was heard, a crowd came together and each one heard the disciples speaking in his own language. Utterly amazed, they asked: "How is it that we hear these men telling about the wonderful works of God in our own languages?" They asked one another, "What does this mean?" Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk. It's only nine in the morning! This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel, 'In the last days, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit, and they will prophesy. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'"

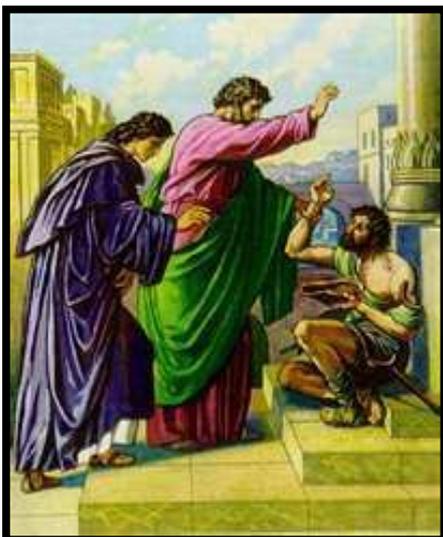
"Men of Israel, listen to this: You know that Jesus of Nazareth did miracles, wonders, and signs. You put Him to death by nailing Him to the cross, but God raised Him from the dead. We are all witnesses of this. He is exalted at the right hand of God. He has received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. Therefore let all Israel know that God has made Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children." About three thousand people received his message and were baptized. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the Lord's Supper, and to prayer. Many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.

- At the Feast of Harvest, our Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was given as promised. The prophet Joel prophesied about this outpouring of the Spirit on God's people.
- Peter called on the people to repent and be baptized. About 3,000 were baptized.

PETER HEALS THE LAME BEGGAR

Acts 3, 4



One day Peter and John were going up to the temple. It was the time of prayer, about three in the afternoon. A man crippled from birth was carried every day to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put to beg. When he saw Peter and John, he asked them for money. Peter said, "Look at us!" So the man looked, expecting to get something from them. Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. He went with them into the temple courts, walking, jumping, and praising God. The priests came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people about Jesus

and put them in jail. But about five thousand of the men believed Peter's message.

The next day the rulers, elders, and teachers of the Law met in Jerusalem and had Peter and John brought before them to question them, "By what power or what name did you heal this man?" Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "If you are asking how this cripple was healed, then know this: It is by the name of Jesus Christ whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed." They commanded Peter and John not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But they replied, "Is it right in God's sight to obey you rather than God? We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard." After further threats they let them go.

On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

- Peter and John healed the lame beggar, who daily begged by the temple gate.
- Peter told the leaders of the Jews that the man was healed in the name of Jesus Christ, whom they had crucified.
- Peter and John were put in jail and questioned the next day. When they were told that they must not preach about Jesus, Peter said they would obey God rather than man.

STEPHEN

Acts 6-8



As the Apostles preached, more and more people came to believe in Jesus until there were about 8,000. This number included many widows. Seven men were elected to help the Apostles care for these widows who were in need. Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, was one of these men. His preaching was powerful and he performed miracles among the people in Jerusalem. Opposition arose from members of the synagogue where he preached about Jesus. Men began to argue with Stephen, but they could not stand up against his preaching and wisdom. Because of this, they stirred up the people and brought false charges against Stephen. One day Stephen preached from the Old Testament and said to them, "You are a stiff-necked people just

like your fathers. You have always resisted the Holy Spirit! Was there a prophet your fathers did not persecute? Now you have betrayed and murdered Jesus." When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to take him out to stone him to death.

But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God." At this they covered their ears, and yelling at the top of their voices, they rushed at him, dragged him out of the city, and began to stone him. The witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul who had come to Jerusalem from Tarsus in Asia Minor to study under the great teacher, Gamaliel.

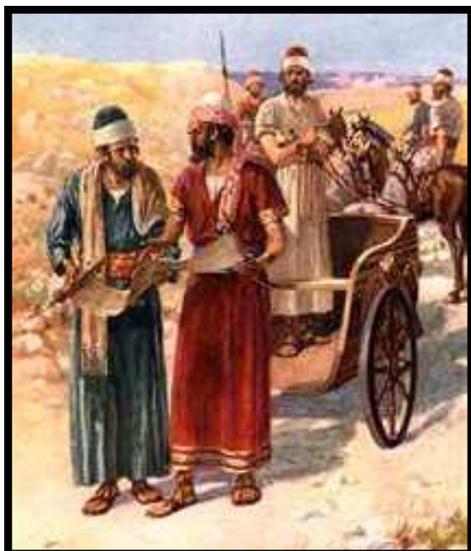
While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep. Stephen became the first Christian martyr. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him.

Saul, who was present at the stoning of Stephen, was given permission to destroy the church by the chief priests. He went from house to house to take men and women to prison. A great persecution broke out in Jerusalem headed by Saul, which scattered the Christians throughout Judea and Samaria. Those who left Jerusalem preached the word wherever they went.

- Anger arose in members of the synagogue when Stephen preached about Jesus, performed miracles, and accused them of killing Jesus.
- When Stephen said he saw heaven open and Jesus on the right hand of God, they dragged him out of the city and stoned him. He became the first Christian martyr.
- Saul, who was there, began to persecute the Christians.

PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH

Acts 8



During the time that Saul was persecuting the Christians, Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed Christ there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, many believed what he said and became Christians. The city was filled with joy.

One day an angel came to Philip and said, "Go south to the desert road that goes from Jerusalem to Gaza." On the road, he saw an Ethiopian eunuch in a chariot. He was an important official in charge of the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. He had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home he was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah. The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."

Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So Philip got into the chariot with him. The eunuch was reading this passage, "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so He did not open His mouth." The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about?"

Then Philip told him about Jesus. The eunuch confessed his faith that Jesus was the Son of God. They came to some water and the eunuch said, "Here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" Then Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, but the eunuch went on his way rejoicing.

- At this time the Gospel was beginning to be preached among the Gentiles. Philip preached Christ in Samaria and many became Christians.
- An angel told Philip to go on the road to Gaza where he met an Ethiopian in his chariot. Philip rode with him and explained the Scriptures beginning with the prophecy in Isaiah.
- The Ethiopian eunuch came to faith and Philip baptized him. The Lord suddenly took Philip away, but the Ethiopian official went on his way rejoicing.

JESUS APPEARS TO SAUL

Acts 9



After the stoning of Stephen, Saul seems to have taken charge of organizing the persecution against the believers. He went to the high priest and asked for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. On the journey to Damascus, a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless, hearing the sound but seeing no one. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see

nothing. They led him by the hand to Damascus. For three days he was blind and did not eat or drink anything.

In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision and said, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man named Saul. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight." "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. He has come here to arrest all who call on your name." But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles."

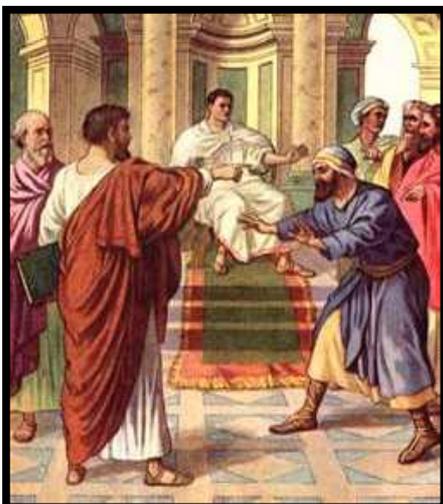
Then Ananias went to the house and placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized. After taking some food, he regained his strength. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus, preaching in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who caused trouble in Jerusalem among the believers? Hasn't he come here to take prisoners to the chief priests?"

Saul grew more and more powerful in speech showing clearly that Jesus is the Christ. After many days, the Jews wanted to kill him. But the believers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall.

- Jesus appeared to Saul and blinded him on the way to Damascus where Saul intended to arrest the Christians.
- God sent Ananias to restore Saul's sight. Saul was baptized and began to preach.
- Saul's preaching of Christ, the Son of God, was so effective in the synagogue that the Jews wanted to kill him.

SAUL BECOMES THE MISSIONARY PAUL

Acts 9, 11



After Saul's conversion by Jesus on the road to Damascus, he immediately began to preach that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God. After fleeing from Damascus, Saul went to Arabia for three years where by revelation Jesus instructed him. He returned to Damascus and then went to Jerusalem staying with Peter for fifteen days. He met none of the Apostles only James, the brother of Jesus. Some doubted that he was a Christian, but Barnabas befriending him pointed to his conversion and preaching in Damascus. By debating with the Jews in a synagogue Saul made the Jews want to kill him. Barnabas with some Christians then took Saul to the port city of Caesarea and sent him home to Tarsus.

Later, word came to the Jerusalem church that some of the Christians who had fled from Jerusalem and had settled in Antioch and had formed a large congregation. They needed help, so the Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to serve in Antioch. Barnabas then went to Tarsus to get Saul to come to Antioch and work with him. Sometime later, the Holy Spirit revealed to the Church that He wanted Saul and Barnabas to go on a missionary journey. Cyprus was the homeland of Barnabas, so they went there first.

Saul, who was named after King Saul, now changed his name to Paul, meaning "the little one." As God's little one, he faithfully served as the apostle to the Gentiles for about thirty years. He suffered many things: being beaten, shipwrecked, stoned, and left for dead, hated by the non-Christian Jews, arrested often, in danger often, and in hunger and want, but he remained faithful to the end. He had one aim in life, to bring people to know and believe in Jesus as the Son of God and the Savior of all mankind. Finally, Paul was martyred by Nero the Roman Emperor, in 67 A.D. He died as a Roman citizen by being beheaded in Rome.

Paul wrote thirteen Epistles in the Bible and if he, as many believe, was the author of Hebrews, it would be fourteen. Some people in the early church slandered him and said that he was a fake. He wrote a beautiful defense of his apostleship which pictured his life and his work in his Epistles.

- Saul changed his name to Paul, meaning "God's little one."
- God chose Paul to be His special missionary to the Gentiles. He served faithfully for thirty years enduring many hardships.
- Paul wrote thirteen Epistles, and probably the book of Hebrews.
- Paul was martyred by Nero, the Roman Emperor, and died as a Roman citizen in Rome in 67 A.D.

PETER RAISES DORCAS FROM THE DEAD & PETER'S VISION Acts 9, 10



Since many believers left Jerusalem in Saul's persecution, Peter went to visit Christians in various cities. While at Lydda, he healed a paralyzed man, named Aeneas, saying, "Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and walk."

In Joppa there was a woman named Dorcas or Tabitha, who was always doing good and helping the poor. She became sick and died. When the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and said, "Please come at once!" Peter went with them, and when he arrived, he was taken upstairs to the room where she lay. All the widows stood around, crying, and showing him the robes and clothing that Dorcas had made. Peter had them all leave the room. He got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called the believers and the widows and presented her to them alive. This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord.

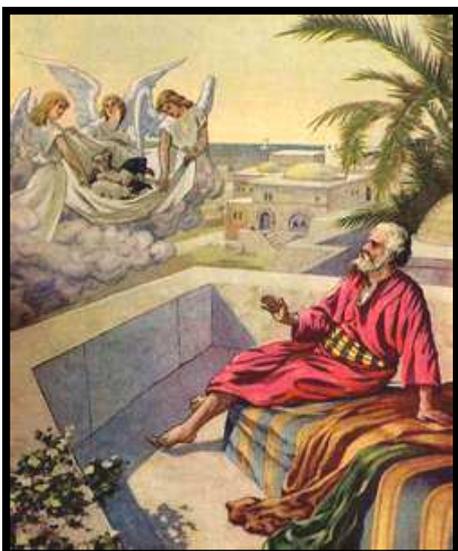
In Caesarea, the Roman headquarters and port city, there was a man named Cornelius, a Roman centurion. He and all his family were devout and God-fearing. He gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius! Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. Now send men to Joppa to bring Peter, who is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea." Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier and sent them to Joppa to find Peter.

About noon the following day as they were approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat. While the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of unclean four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything unclean." The voice spoke to him a second time, "What God has cleaned, don't you call unclean." This happened three times, then the sheet was taken back to heaven.

- While visiting Christians, Peter raised Dorcas from the dead in Joppa.
- An angel came to Cornelius, a Roman Centurion, in a vision to send for Peter.
- In a vision, God told Peter to kill and eat from unclean animals and birds held in a sheet let down from heaven. Peter refused and called them unclean. God said, "What I have called clean, don't you call unclean."

PETER GOES TO CORNELIUS

Acts 10



While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius came to Simon's house and asked for Peter. The Holy Spirit said to Peter, "Three men are looking for you. Go with them, for I have sent them." Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?" The men replied, "We have come from Cornelius, a righteous and God-fearing man. A holy angel told him to have you come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say."

The next day they left and the following day they arrived in Caesarea. When Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. But Peter said, "Stand up. I am only a man." Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. He said to them, "You know that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him, but God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. Why have you sent for me?" Cornelius answered: "Four days ago I was in my house praying. Suddenly, a man in shining clothes stood before me and said, 'Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. Send to Joppa for Peter at the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.' So I sent for you immediately. Now we are here to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us."

Then Peter began to speak: "I now understand that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear Him and does what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. He commanded us to preach to the people that He is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about Him that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name."

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all of them. Peter and his companions were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had also been poured out on the Gentiles. They heard them speaking in other languages and praising God. Then Peter said, "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." So they were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. The light to lighten the Gentiles was indeed spreading among mankind.

- Peter went to Cornelius, a Gentile, and shared with them the Gospel of Christ.
- The Holy Spirit was poured out on the Gentiles and they were baptized.
- Peter now understood the meaning of his vision. God wants ALL men to be saved. The Gospel is to be preached to all people and all nations.

PETER IS TAKEN OUT OF PRISON BY AN ANGEL

Acts 12



The growth of the Christian Church upset the leaders of the Jews. King Herod Agrippa decided to persecute the Church by removing some of its leaders. He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. When he saw that this pleased the Jews, he arrested Peter and had him put in prison to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers.

The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter, bound by two chains, was sleeping between two soldiers. Another stood guard at the entrance. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. The angel woke Peter and said, "Quick, get up! Put on your sandals and wrap your cloak around you and follow me." The chains fell off and Peter followed him out of the prison. They passed the guards and the iron gate leading to the city opened by itself. When they had walked the length of one street, the angel left him. Then Peter realized that the Lord had sent His angel and rescued him from prison and Herod. He went to the house of Mary the mother of John Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying for him.

Peter knocked at the outer entrance and Rhoda, a servant girl, came to answer the door. When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it. She cried out, "Peter is at the door!" They thought she was out of her mind. When she kept insisting it was Peter, they said, "It must be his angel." Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. Peter motioned for them to be quiet and he told them how the Lord had brought him out of prison. He told them to tell James, the brother of Jesus, and the other brethren in Jerusalem about what had happened. He then left for another place.

In the morning, there was a large commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter. After Herod had a thorough search made for him, he cross-examined the guards, and ordered that they be executed.

Peter continued to preach about Jesus until he was an old man. He was martyred under Nero by being crucified. Tradition says that he felt unworthy of being crucified like Jesus, so they crucified upside down. When and where he died is not really known. It could have been in Rome about the same time as Paul. Peter wrote two books of the Bible, First and Second Peter.

- Herod had James, the brother of John, put to death and Peter put in prison.
- Freed from prison by an angel, Peter served in Asia and later in Asia Minor with Paul. He was arrested and taken to Rome.
- Peter was martyred under Nero. Tradition says he was crucified upside down.

JOHN, THE BELOVED DISCIPLE

1 John 2 Revelations



Peter, James, and John were set apart as leaders by Jesus and formed an inner circle among the disciples. John seems to have been closest to Jesus. From the cross, Jesus gave the care of His mother to John who owned a house in Jerusalem. The mother of John and James seems to have been Salome, perhaps a sister to Mary, the mother of Jesus. After James was martyred, John, Peter, and James the brother of Jesus, were leaders in the Jerusalem church.

After some time, John moved to Ephesus where he became the bishop of Asia Minor. He was exiled to the stone quarry on the Island of Patmos at the age of ninety-six. He survived and returned to Ephesus. He became extremely old and feeble. Tradition says that they carried him regularly to church on a stretcher. He kept saying one thing to the people, “Little children, love one another.”

John wrote three Epistles of the Bible and the Book of Revelations. In the Book of Revelation, future trials for the church are foretold in symbolic language. The general truth it proclaims is that all Christians must be found faithful to Jesus until death. There will be an end to this world in which all evil and unbelievers will be destroyed in everlasting judgment. All believers will come to heaven and live with God in holiness, bliss, and glory forever through faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

In the Book of Revelation, John wrote of visions he had on Patmos. He saw and heard Jesus speak most beautifully as the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end of all things. He saw the coming of a new heaven, a new earth, and the new Jerusalem, the everlasting dwelling place of God with His people. John bids us to listen, to believe, and to stand straight and tall in faith, for our destiny as followers of Jesus, our Lord and Savior, is to live with Him forever in heaven.

John was the only disciple who died a natural death.

- John’s message in his old age was “Love one another.”
- John wrote three Epistles and Revelation.
- In Revelation, John comforts, strengthens, and urges Christians to hold onto their faith until Christ comes in the final Judgment to take them home to heaven.
- John was the only disciple who died a natural death.

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